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MORAL ADMONITION AND THE EMOTIONS IN SENECA'S PHILOSOPHICAL WORKS

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Abstract

Stoic ethics is widely presented by both ancient critics and modern readers as dogmatically intellectualist and antithetical to the emotions in any form. In this dissertation, I question this blanket assumption and argue that Seneca recognizes the pedagogical benefits of what we today would call moral emotions. In his *Letters* and *Dialogues*, Seneca repeatedly urges his addressees to feel ashamed about their missteps or inspires them to the pursuit of the moral good by means of incisive *sententiae* or vivid portrayals of exemplary men and women who embodied their truth. Most existing scholarship argues that such appeals to the emotions conflict with the intellectualism of the Stoic school and concludes that Seneca was an eclectic or pragmatic philosopher who either disregarded theoretical consistency or aligned himself with a supposedly anti-intellectualist tendency in later Stoicism.

In this dissertation, I question this reading of Seneca and show that his approach does not reject Stoic intellectualism but in fact appropriates a key tenet of it, namely the recognition that all human beings possess "seeds of the virtues" from birth. Following the early Greek Stoics, Seneca argues that such "seeds" are implanted in us by Nature's providence and serve as starting-points (*aphormai*) for our pursuit of the moral good. In each of my chapters, I show that key passages from the *Letters* in which Seneca recommends seemingly unorthodox forms of admonition, such as shaming his interlocutors, or confronting them with awe-inspiring *exempla*, explicitly refer to this Stoic concept of "seeds of the virtues". When Seneca employs forms of admonition that elicit moral emotions such as shame or admiration, in other words, he is not eliciting misguided emotions but activating his addressees' natural and inborn inclination towards the moral good.

Chapter Descriptions

In my first chapter, I discuss what I mean by moral admonition and explain why forms of it that appeal to the emotions are problematic for a Stoic such as Seneca. In addition, I explain the problems with previous scholarship on this topic and lay the groundwork for my own approach by showing that Seneca's conception of moral admonition is not eclectic or "unorthodox", as many scholars have claimed, but is in fact fundamentally similar to Chrysippus' approach as presented in his *Therapeutics.* Through my reading of *Letters* 94 and 95, I show that Seneca sees moral development as a two-stage process, which starts by recovering a person's capacity for moral reasoning through a variety of admonitory strategies and then proceeds to deepen that person's moral understanding through theoretical instruction in Stoic philosophy.

In chapter 2, I focus on the moral psychology behind Seneca's employment of shaming criticism. My main argument is that he uses this form of criticism as a propaedeutic approach, designed to confront his addressees with the inappropriateness of their behavior and to appeal to their inborn aversion of morally wrong behavior. In addition to showing the parallels between Seneca's approach and the approach recommended by Chrysippus, I show that Seneca connects this inborn aversion of vice not just with the Stoic concept of the "seeds of the virtues" but also with the popular notion of *conscientia*, or moral conscience. In doing so, he offers his Roman readers a way to make sense of his Stoic argument by presenting it in a way that is culturally and conceptually familiar.

In chapter 3, I look more closely at the social and rhetorical dimensions of Seneca's shaming criticism and examine how he adapts his admonitory approach to his individual addressees' personalities and needs. Notwithstanding Seneca's engagement with his addressees'

conventional beliefs and values, I argue against the common view that he offers merely eclectic or pragmatic advice and show how he gradually but surely nudges them towards an increasingly Stoic point of view.

In chapters 4 and 5, I shift from moral emotions focused on the addressee's self to emotions derived from exposure to truthful moral sayings and speeches (chapter 4) or *exempla* that embody particular virtues or vices (chapter 5). As in chapter two, I argue that Seneca justifies the enthusiasm, admiration, or disgust readers might feel when confronted with such representations of moral or immoral behavior by pointing out that their emotional responses are elicited by truths that spark their inborn moral inclinations. I further show how Seneca aims to develop this initial spark of enthusiasm into a sustained, practical, and theoretically informed moral commitment.

Acknowledgements

"He who receives a benefit with gratitude", Seneca writes, "repays the first installment on his debt" (*Ben.* II.22). It is certainly a comforting thought that the many debts accumulated in writing this dissertation can be at least partly repaid by acknowledging them with a word of thanks. This project could not have been brought to successful completion without the unflagging support of my committee chair, Shadi Bartsch-Zimmer, who helped me to improve many half-developed thoughts by asking the right questions at the right time in a spirit of constructive joint inquiry. I also owe many thanks to Elizabeth Asmis and Martha Nussbaum for their insightful comments, acute questions, and moral support during the entire process of developing my thoughts and revising my drafts.

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Note on Translations and Latin Texts

For the Latin text of Seneca's *Epistulae Morales* and *Dialogi*, I have used the editions by L.D. Reynolds in the Oxford Classical Texts series (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1965, 1977). Unless otherwise noted, all translations in this dissertation are adapted from the public-domain translations by Richard M. Gummere (*Epistles*, Loeb Classical Library, 1917-1925, volumes 75-77) and John W. Basore's (*Moral Essays*, 1928-1935, Loeb Classical Library volumes 214, 254, 310).

Introduction

As a philosopher who offered moral counsel to friends and family members, Seneca had a great interest in practical questions about philosophical pedagogy: what kind of methods are the most effective in admonishing individuals experiencing strong emotions? What is the best way to exhort a person towards the moral life? To what extent can a philosopher employ the tools of rhetoric to appeal to his interlocutors' emotions? Questions such as these revolve around the relationship between rhetoric and moral psychology or, in more practical terms, between moral admonition, the art of convincing one's interlocutors to adopt a different way of thinking and acting through a variety of rhetorical means, and the emotions[1].

Most ancient philosophical schools addressed this set of questions in one way or another, but they posed particular challenges for Stoics such as Seneca. As moral intellectualists, the Stoics believed that all the emotions of the ordinary non-wise person emerged from misguided value judgments. As such, Stoic emotion theory seems to prohibit rhetorical appeals to the emotions, even for hortatory or therapeutic purposes. The early Stoics, in fact, believed that rhetoric – at least in its conventional form – was misleading. "To speak well", a Stoic dictum goes, "is to speak the truth"[2]. As Diogenes Laertius reports, the early Stoics believed that rhetorical effectiveness consisted of just a few key qualities: linguistic purity, clarity, conciseness, appropriateness and distinction[3]. Diogenes further mentions that Zeno of Citium, the founder of the Stoic school, criticized people who were overly concerned with their manner of speaking, and preferred an

[1] For a discussion of the definitional issues surrounding the terms admonition, paraenesis, and protreptic, and my approach to the debates about this, which borrows from Jordan (1986), cf. *infra*, pp. 21-22.

[2] *Anon. Proleg. Ad Hermog. Rhet.* Gr. VII:8, cited in Smiley (1919:50).

[3] *Diog. Laert.* VII.59: Ἀρεταὶ δὲ λόγου εἰσὶ πέντε, Ἑλληνισμός, σαφήνεια, συντομία, πρέπον, κατασκευή.

unadorned and matter-of-fact style[4]. In an article subtitled "the failure of Stoic rhetoric", Catherine Atherton writes that Stoic rhetoric, as presented in our sources, "appears rigid at best and unworkable at worst"[5].

In addition to their more general reservations about rhetoric, the early Stoics believed that ordinary emotions (*pathè*) are based on incorrect beliefs and need to be eradicated by replacing the misguided value judgments underlying them with correct ones. Only sages, who always judged matters correctly, could feel a select number of good emotions (*eupatheiai*) such as joy, caution, and wishing. On this view, there seems to be no room for types of admonition that appeal to emotions such as shame, disgust, desire or admiration. In modern terms, Stoicism does not seem acknowledge the benefit of moral emotions, which "respond to moral violations or motivate moral behavior", as Jonathan Haidt puts it, in a way that supports a person's moral development[6].

In light of the Stoics' apparent denial of states in between emotions and *eupatheiai,* their contemporary critics often faulted them for violating their own principles when they did employ rhetoric that appealed to their interlocutor's emotions, and for their lack of persuasiveness when they didn't. Cicero, who was sympathetic toward Stoic ethics but disliked their pedagogical approach, attacks the Stoics for their refusal or inability to employ standard forms of admonition, such as consolation, exhortation, warnings and counsel[7]. Plutarch, on the other hand, points out that the Stoics did employ rhetoric, praising and criticizing their interlocutors in a way that brought about emotions of either delight or repentance and shame. This, Plutarch, argues, shows the

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4 *Diog. Laert.* VII.18.

5 Atherton (1988:415). On Stoic rhetoric cf. Moretti (1995) and Protopapas-Marnelli (2002).

6 On Haidt's categorization of the moral emotions, cf. *infra,* p. 19. Rather than seeing emotions as necessarily pathological or misleading, as the predominant Kantian/Cartesian approach has it, scholars in the tradition of positive psychology, such as Martin Seligman and Jonathan Haidt, have emphasized the potential for moral development inherent in many emotions.

7 Cic. *Fin* IV.3.6-7. On Cicero's reception of Stoic rhetoric, cf. Moretti (1995, ch.3), Stem (2005/6), Inabinet (2011) and Bartsch (2013).

inconsistency between their theory and their pedagogical approach.[8] In his *On Moral Virtue*, he takes the Stoics to task for this apparent contradiction between their conception of the emotions and their admonitory techniques.

1. Stoicism, Admonition and Emotion: A Status Quaestionis

Modern scholars often concur with Plutarch in his criticism of the Stoics' inconsistency and point out that the stark bifurcation between the emotions of the ordinary person and the good emotions of the Stoic sage fails to account for the relevant distinction between emotions based on misguided value-judgments and feelings resulting from an actual concern with one's own moral well-being. John Cooper, for example, argues that that the emotions Stoic *proficientes* feel about their moral failures or achievements should be regarded as qualitatively different from ordinary *pathè* and "need to be categorized somehow […] as preliminary adumbrations of the full *eupatheiai* by which wise people themselves are moved"[9]. Similarly, Margaret Graver has argued that the Stoics' refusal to accept an intermediary category in between *pathè* and *eupatheiai* lead to troubling theoretical inconsistencies and suggests that "the [Stoic] classification [of emotional states] must be expanded"[10]. On her reading, there is room in the Stoic system for affective responses that

[8] As Graver points out, Plutarch does not tell us which Stoics he has in mind, and whether this employment of shaming criticism was a recent development or went back to the founders of the school. In another text, however (*infra,* p. 39), Plutarch criticizes Chrysippus *nominatim* for "stir[ring] up the affections of others with some passion in himself". This may be an indication that he is not just criticizing a recent trend in Stoicism, but an ongoing phenomenon.

[9] Cooper (2004: 197, 201-2). Cf. Kamtekar (1998:139), who points out that "the Stoic distinction between *aidōs* and *aischunè*, a true vs. a false judgment about good and bad, is superimposed upon a different – perhaps conventional – distinction between the sincere desire to live according to a given standard versus the desire to appear to be living according to that standard in order to win a good reputation. But it ought to be important to Stoic philosophers to distinguish sincere mistakes about what is moral from non-moral judgments".

[10] Graver (2007:192). Cf. Byers (2013: 127-151) who similarly argues that the Stoic taxonomy of the affects as we know it is "unsymmetrical, insofar as we have a preliminary passion (*propatheia*), but no preliminary good emotion (*no propeupatheia*)". As Byers puts it (2013:127), "this is odd, given that the preliminary passion is caused by one's impression, and according to Stoic epistemology all judgments – including those that constitute good

would a "mix" of correct and misguided responses, for example moral shame combined with fear, or remorse combined with grief. Such mixed responses, Graver argues, "fall within the parameters established by Stoics for appropriate response to integral goods and evils" and, as such, can be "permitted and even encouraged without departure from Stoic principles"[11].

In a similar vein, Tad Brennan has speculated that, even though the Stoics never openly recognized a category of moral emotions, there is nothing in the Stoic theory of the emotions that specifically precludes the possibility of what he calls "veridical emotions"[12]. More recently, Brennan has refined this suggestion, proposing the term "kataleptic emotions" for this class of emotions, by analogy with the Stoic's epistemological concept of "kataleptic impressions". As he puts it:

> If emotion is the evaluative analogue of opinion, then it was always a mistake to attribute to the Stoics a sweeping ban on all emotions. In the purely epistemic case, there is no general ban on assenting to *kataleptic* impressions; it is false impressions, and true but non-*kataleptic* impressions that we must avoid. If the evaluative case runs parallel to this, then it should be possible to have a permissible emotional analogue of *katalepsis*, which is an emotion and an opinion when had by a non-Sage, but a *eupatheia* and knowledge when had by a Sage[13].

All three scholars mentioned so far, notwithstanding their differences, claim that the Stoics could, or should have recognized a category a moral emotions, feelings in between the emotions of the ordinary person and the *eupatheiai* of the Stoic *sapiens.* Such emotions would be based on a correct judgment (for example, this action is shameful, or praiseworthy) without being based on a complete, overall grasp of the good. As such, to build on Brennan's analogy, we might say that

emotions – must be preceded by impressions carrying propositional content". On Byers' view, Augustine was the first to fill this taxonomic gap in Stoic emotion theory.

11 Graver (2007:211).

12 Brennan (1998:51), (2003:289).

13 Brennan (2005:111).

they are the emotional equivalent of the *kathèkonta,* the "appropriate actions" of the Stoic proficiens, as opposed to the *katorthōmata*, or "perfect" actions of the wise person[14].

While Cooper, Graver, and Brennan all agree that the absolute distinction between ordinary emotions and *eupatheiai* leads to troubling inconsistencies, other scholars claim that the Stoics had good reasons to reject such a concession, as it would basically undercut their theory of the emotions in its entirety. Rachana Kamtekar, for example, argues that "Cooper's proposals [that the Stoics should have recognized preliminary adumbrations of the full *eupatheiai*] amount to advocating that the Stoics adopt the Peripatetic ideal of *metriopatheia*.[15]" Similarly, Striker contends that if the Stoics had accepted the theoretical possibility of a "reasonable distress" that could be moderated and used as a spur for moral improvement, they would have had to admit that other emotions could be similarly moderated, thereby in fact relinquishing their position on *apatheia*[16].

As this brief *status quaestionis* of the scholarship indicates, there is a considerable disagreement about the question whether the Stoics did, could have, or should have allowed some kind of intermediary states in between emotions and *eupatheiai,* and whether such states could have a beneficial effect on a person's moral progress. Most of this scholarship has focused either on the early Stoics or on the writings of Cicero or Epictetus[17]. Seneca's employment of similar admonitory strategies, on the other hand, has been largely overlooked, or discussed simply as an element of his style or of his eclectic, pragmatic approach.

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[14] Graver (2007:211) similarly argues that the *proficiens'* affective responses to features of our own character and conduct can sometimes be based on correct beliefs, and writes that such responses "would then have the same status as our other actions have when premised on true beliefs about appropriateness; that is, the status of *kathèkonta,* the ordinary person's 'appropriate actions,' as distinct from the 'fully correct actions' (*katorthōmata*) of the wise".

[15] Kamtekar (2004:220).

[16] Striker (2007:373).

[17] An exception is Graver (2007: 208-10) who briefly discusses the role of remorse in Seneca's *De Tranquillitate.*

2. Aims and Contribution of this Dissertation

With this dissertation, I aim to correct this oversight in the scholarship and show that Seneca's philosophical works not only contain astute practical recommendations on the therapeutic usefulness of emotions such as shame, disgust, enthusiasm, or admiration, but also offer a theoretically sophisticated and coherent explanation for their effectiveness that is rooted in Stoic theory[18]. As such, this dissertation represents the first full-length study of Seneca's admonitory practices and their relation to moral progress, rhetoric, and the emotions. In doing so, it goes beyond the narrowly disciplinary focus of much of the older scholarship – be it philological, historical or philosophical – and offers an interdisciplinary account based on recent developments in the study of ancient moral admonition and practical philosophy. It offers both a theoretical account of Seneca's claims about the effectiveness of moral admonition and discuss practical examples of such appeals in his *Letters* and *Dialogues.* My goal in doing so is is to show not only that the strategies he uses are consistent with a Stoic approach to moral education, but also to highlight his rhetorical sophistication and social *aplomb* in nudging his addressees towards a Stoic point of view.

Though Seneca does not offer a fully fleshed-out, continuous account of his position on what we might call the moral emotions, many passages in his philosophical works reveal that he believed certain emotional responses, such as feeling ashamed about one's moral errors, or admiring the actions of an exemplary individual, could be rational, beneficial and lead to moral

[18] I adopt Jonathan Haidt's (2003:853) broad definition of moral emotions as "emotions that respond to moral violations or that motivate moral behavior". Haidt distinguishes four families of moral emotions: self-conscious (shame, embarrassment and guilt), other-condemning (anger, disgust and contempt), other-praising (gratitude, awe, and elevation), and other-suffering (i.e. suffering *on behalf* of others, as in compassion). In this dissertation, I will focus on the first three categories and focus on the fundamental task of the Stoic conception of ethics, selecting what is worth pursuing and worth avoiding.

progress. In addition, he explains how this claim can be reconciled with Stoic emotion theory, by arguing that emotional responses such as shame about one's moral shortcomings, or reverence for a moral *exemplum,* are spontaneous expressions of the "seeds of the virtues" within us, a metaphor that refers to what the Greek Stoics called *aphormai,* or "starting-points" of the virtues[19]. As I will show, this notion is grounded in the Stoic theory of *oikeiôsis,* the inborn tendency that urges human beings to not only seek what supports their self-preservation, but also to reject what harms their physical and moral constitution[20].

Seneca's argument that admonition can elicit beneficial, moral emotions in the Stoic *proficiens* and even in an ordinary person amounts to a recognition that there are feelings that are neither ordinary emotions – since they are not based on mistaken beliefs – nor *eupatheiai*, the "good emotions" which only the wise person consistently experiences[21]. Rather, they are expressions of our inborn inclination towards the good, which can be progressively refined until they follow entirely and consistently from correct judgments and attain the status of *eupatheiai.* By introducing this kind of intermediary states in between emotions and *eupatheiai,* Seneca both innovates and builds upon recognizably Stoic theories and addresses scholarly worries about gaps in Stoic emotion theory[22].

Still, one may object that Seneca's recognition of such beneficial emotions amount to an endorsement of the Platonic and Peripatetic ideal of *metriopatheia* (moderation of the emotions),

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[19] The metaphor was common and can be found in Cic. *Tusc*. III.2 and Cic. *Fin* V.18, V.43. Cf. Dross (2010:252-5) and Horowitz (1998), who discuss the history of this pair of metaphors, in Stoicism and later philosophy.

[20] Seneca explicitly makes the connection between the *semina virtutum / aphormai* and the theory of *oikeiosis* in his discussion of the seeds of the virtues in *Ep.* 108, when he claims that it easy to exhort a listener to a desire for the good (*cupido recti*) in light of the fact that all human beings possess seeds of the virtues (*Ep.* 108.8). Further on in the letter, he connects this desire for the good with *oikeiosis,* arguing that our minds are easily won over to the "love of what is honorable and good" (*Ep.* 108.12: *conciliantur ingenia ad honesti rectique amorem*). *Conciliatio* is the standard Latin translation of the Greek *oikeiôsis.*

[21] I use the term "ordinary emotion" to refer to the misguided *pathè* of the ordinary person, as opposed to the *eupatheiai* or "good emotions" of the Stoic sage. On the theoretical possibility of such "mixed" states in Stoicism, cf. Graver (2007), cited *supra,* p. 13.

[22] Cf. the *status quaestionis* on pp. 12-14 above.

which he explicitly condemns in several of his works[23]. The feeling-states Seneca admits, however, are not ordinary emotions, as they are not based on mistaken beliefs. As such, they are not moderated emotions but a category in their own right, which means the Stoic restriction against emotional appeals, does not apply to them. Seneca's recognition of such intermediary states anticipates the criticism of modern scholars, who have argued that the Stoic bifurcation between ordinary emotions and *eupatheiai* fails to account for the obvious distinction between emotions based on misguided value-judgments and feelings resulting from an authentic concern with one's moral well-being.[24]

On Seneca's account, such intermediary states are similar to the *eupatheiai* in that they are based on correct judgments. Still, as his mention of the fleeting character of such feelings shows, they lack the stability that characterizes the sage's *eupatheiai*, which are based not just on individual correct beliefs but on a solid foundation of interlocking correct beliefs.[25] Following Tad Brennan, we might draw the analogy between Stoic emotion theory and Stoic epistemology, which recognizes that the ordinary person can have *katalepseis* (necessarily true cognitions) though only the Stoic sage has the fully stable and interlocking cognitions, which provide the basis for an unshakably virtuous disposition.[26] The lack of stability of such intermediary states, may explain why Seneca – somewhat confusingly, but perhaps in an effort to preserve the Stoic theoretical

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[23] Cf. Kamtekar (2004:220) and Striker (2007:373).

[24] Cf. *supra,* pp. 12-14. Byers (2013: 127-51), who does not address the letters discussed in this chapter, has argued that Augustine was the first to explicitly recognize such preliminaries to good emotions, which she calls *proeupatheiai.* On her reading, a *proeupatheia* stands to a *eupatheia* as a *propatheia* stands to a *pathos*. This view is different from my claim that Seneca recognizes preliminary adumbrations of the *eupatheiai* in that Byers' *propeupatheiai* are not the product of assent to a correct impression. On my reading (discussed in chapter 4), Seneca recognizes that a Stoic *proficiens* can assent to a correct impression, but fail to sustain a virtuous impulse on account of competing, mistaken considerations that enter their mind (cf. *Ep.* 108.7).

[25] On this, cf. Kamtekar (1998:142) and Sorabji (2000:49).

[26] On the distinction between *eupatheiai* and ordinary emotions, cf. *supra,* p. 11.

dichotomy – occasionaly refers to them as emotions (*adfectus*) even though they are based on correct beliefs[27].

Regardless of whether we think Seneca's argument represents the Stoic schools' "orthodox" view – a deeply problematic concept in and of itself – his recognition of the problem of the moral emotions and his attempt to address it in a theoretically sophisticated and psychologically realistic fashion clearly represents a significant moment in the history of Stoic practical ethics[28]

3. Outline of this Dissertation

I will develop this argument over the course of five chapters. In chapter 1, I discuss what I mean by moral admonition and moral emotions and explain why forms of admonition that appeal to emotions are problematic for a Stoic such as Seneca. In addition, I explain how scholars have addressed this problem and how my approach differs from previous work and contributes to ongoing debates about Seneca's Stoicism. In doing so, I focus primarily on *Letters* 94 and 95, two long letters that contain Seneca's most detailed and sophisticated discussions of Stoic pedagogical theory. This chapter lays the groundwork for the following chapters by showing that Seneca's

[27] This argument finds support in *Ep.* 59.4, in which Seneca argues that an ordinary person can feel something akin to the *eupatheia* joy (*gaudium*) but simultaneously insists that this feeling should still be called delight (*voluptas*), an emotion, on account of the fact that it is "weak and easily led into a different direction" *(in diversum statim inclinaturum).*

[28] As both Sorabji (2000:101-3) and Inwood (2005:25-7) point out, the notion of a Stoic "orthodoxy" represented by Chrysippus, and challenged by Posidonius is a modern scholarly construct and should be treated with caution. In this dissertation, I will use the terms "orthodox" and "unorthodox" to point to the views scholars have typically associated with these terms without endorsing the ultimate validity of these categories. Christopher Gill (2005:464-6) even argues that the sharp distinction between psychological monism anddualism was not articulated until much later, and is first attested in Plutarch. On his view, Zeno, Chrysippus and Posidonius as well as Seneca "highlighted similarities between Platonic and Stoic thought without seeing the two though-patterns involved as fundamentally opposed". Cf. Graver (2013:269), who similarly argues that "Seneca is not overly concerned about psychic monism for its own sake, but allows himself to speak in ways that suggest bipartition or even tripartition where rhetorical considerations make this advantageous".

conception of moral admonition is not eclectic or "unorthodox", as many scholars have claimed, but is fundamentally similar to Chrysippus' approach as presented in his *Therapeutics.*

In chapters 2 and 3, I focus on forms of admonition that instill what Jonathan Haidt has called the "self-conscious" emotions (shame, remorse and regret), which respond to moral violations of one's own[29]. In chapter 2, I focus on the moral psychology behind Seneca's employment of shaming criticism. My main argument here is that Seneca uses this form of criticism as a propaedeutic approach, designed to confront his addressees with the inappropriateness of their behavior and to appeal to their inborn aversion of vice. In chapter 3, I look more closely at the social and rhetorical dimensions of Seneca's shaming criticism and examine how Seneca adapts his admonitory approach to his individual addressees' personalities and needs and how he exploits their conventional beliefs and values in order to lead them to an increasingly Stoic point of view.

In chapters 4 and 5, I shift from moral emotions focused on the self to emotions derived from exposure to truthful moral sayings or speeches (ch. 4) and *exempla* that embody virtue or vice (ch. 5). In Jonathan Haidt's terminology, these chapters will focus on "other-praising emotions", in particular what he calls elevation (the emotion elicited by hearing inspirational words or witnessing moral exemplars) and on "other-condemning emotions" disgust and contempt, which respond to the moral violations of others and reinforce the values applied in judging them [30]. In both chapters, and in the dissertation at large, I will show how Seneca's belief that certain moral emotions can be justified within a Stoic therapeutic approach relies on his belief that all

[29] I prefer Taylor's term "emotions of self-assessment" (1985) over Haidt's term "self-conscious emotions", as it brings out more clearly that they are not just about awareness of one's mistakes, but about judging and assessing them.

[30] Haidt (2003) uses this term, which he borrows from Thomas Jefferson, to point to the emotional responses to moral exemplars and other representations of moral goodness, for which no commonly accepted term exists in English. Cf. *infra,* p. 131.

human beings possess an inborn attraction to the moral good and a concomitant aversion from evil, which can be activated by means of vivid representations of either good or evil.

Chapter 1: Admonition, Emotion, and Stoic Therapeutics

Scholars of ancient philosophy have long recognized that philosophical texts from the Hellenistic and Roman period are not merely theoretical treatises but contain elements of admonition and exhortation that aim to motivate the reader to the pursuit of wisdom[1]. As Epictetus argues, a philosopher's goal should not be to deliver clever lectures, but to exhort his audiences towards the pursuit of philosophy. "If the philosopher's discourse does not produce this effect", he writes, "it is lifeless and so is the speaker himself"[2].

In much of the older scholarship, moral admonition, often referred to as *paraenesis,* was largely treated as a sub-philosophical activity, eclectic in its underpinnings, repetitious in its literary form, and amorphous in its focus[3]. In the post-war scholarship, however, this rather disparaging approach has gradually given way to a renewed appreciation of the centrality of moral admonition to ancient philosophical conceptions of moral development[4]. The work of Paul Rabbow, Pierre Hadot, and Michel Foucault, among others, has paved the way for a more in-depth examination of the hortatory aspect of ancient philosophical writing. The exact definition of the terms *paraenesis,* and the closely related term *protreptic,* however, has been the subject of ongoing scholarly debates[5]. In this dissertation, I will employ a working definition of *paraenesis* or moral

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1 Pierre Hadot (1995:49-70 and *passim*) in particular, has highlighted the performative aspect of most Hellenistic and Roman philosophical writings.

2 . Καὶ μὴν ἂν μὴ ταῦτα ἐμποιῇ ὁ τοῦ φιλοσόφου λόγος, νεκρός ἐστι καὶ αὐτὸς καὶ ὁ λέγων (*Disc.* III.23.29, translation Oldfather, *LCL*). On Epictetus' protreptic style cf. Long (2001: 54-57).

3 For a detailed overview of the scholarship on this topic cf. Tite (2009:59-63). This bias is reflected in Von Arnim's *Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta* (1903-5), which, as Brunt (2013:11) notes, systematically omits paraenetic material.

4 Apart from the seminal work by Hadot, Foucault and Nussbaum, the topic of philosophical paraenesis has received attention primarily from New Testament scholars, who employ the concept in their analysis of early Christian spiritual direction. For an overview of this vast body of scholarship, and the different definitions of paraenesis and protreptic that have been offered, cf. the collection of essays by Engberg-Pedersen (2004) and the recent monography by Tite (2009).

5 The ongoing effort to establish a catchall definition of *paraenesis* and related terms has often resulted in a forced systematicity, ignoring the differences between individual authors and texts (cf. Slings 1995:189). As Engberg-

admonition – terms I will use interchangeably – that focuses not on specific formal features, but on the "exigence of the situation", which is to "convinc[e] or exhort[t] people towards a different way of life through a variety of rhetorical means"[6]. Seneca himself variously refers to this part of philosophy as the *praeceptiva pars, praeceptio,* or, most commonly *monitio or admonitio.*[7] Ian Kidd convincingly suggests that this lack of terminological clarity is the product of Seneca's struggles to find good Latin equivalents for the established technical terms he found in his Greek sources[8]. As Kidd points out, Seneca somewhat confusingly uses the term *praecepta* both to refer to moral precepts *stricto sensu,* that is to say, guidelines for moral action particular types of situations, and as a *pars pro toto* for the paraenetic part of philosophy in its entirety, the genus of which precept-giving in the narrower sense is a species. A similar problem surrounds the terms *monitio* and *admonitio,* which Seneca uses both to refer to a kind of *paraenesis* that uses *praecepta* and to refer to the *parainetikos topos* in its entirety[9]. To differentiate between the two meanings, I will employ the transliteration *admonitio* for the former and the English terms admonition or moral admonition for the latter.

Notwithstanding the renewed interest in ancient *paraenesis* in recent decades, the scholarship on Senecan admonition has largely failed to offer a satisfactory account of its philosophical, social and rhetorical dimensions. First of all, there is a tendency to discuss Seneca's

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Pedersen (2004) has argued, the best approach is to study the particular contextual meaning of such terms as each authors uses them.

6 Jordan (1986: 330).

7 Kidd (1988:647-9). Cf. *Ep.* 95.34, in which Seneca lists *praecepta* as just one kind of *paraenesis* along with *consolationes* and *adhortationes.*

8 Kidd speculates that Seneca's translation of the Greek *parainetikos topos* as *praeceptiva pars* (*Ep.* 95.1) is influenced by his particular focus on *praecepta* in *Ep.* 94, even though other species of *paraenesis,* such as *laudatio* or *ethologia* do not rely on *praecepta* in the narrow sense.

9 The first usage is particularly evident in §43 (*Si inponit pudorem castigatio, cur admonitio non faciat, etiam si nudis praeceptis utitur?),* but also occurs in in §3, 8, 10, 12, 21, 22, 23, 31, 32, 33, 36, and 60. For the second usage, see §39, in which Seneca describes *consolatio, dissuasio, adhortatio, obiurgatio, and laudatio* as *monitionum genera.* Even more confusingly, *admonitio* is described in §25 as a form of *adhortatio (admonere genus adhortandi est),* whereas Seneca explicitly distinguishes *admonitio* from *exhortatio* in *Ep.* 13.15 (*Nimium diu te cohortor, cum tibi admonitione magis quam exhortatione opus sit*).

moral rhetoric as a purely stylistic element, ignoring its philosophical and psychological implications[10]. Secondly, and often in tandem with this narrowly philological approach, Seneca scholars have often described Seneca as a pragmatic, eclectic 'spiritual director', concerned primarily with pedagogical effectiveness rather than with theoretical consistency. Thirdly and finally, there is the common belief that Seneca's Stoicism was influenced by the dualistic, Platonic psychology of Panaetius and Posidonius. Despite the differences between this set of interpretations, they all arrive at the conclusion that Seneca's uses of rhetoric are inconsistent with Stoic emotion theory and the school's prescriptions on the uses of rhetoric.

In this chapter, I will lay the groundwork for the rest of this dissertation by arguing, on the contrary, that Seneca's conception of moral admonition is based on Chrysippus' belief that individuals who are caught up in emotional reasoning are incapable of processing rational arguments that explain why their reasoning is misguided. The first step in helping such individuals Seneca argues – following Chrysippus – is to restore their capacity for moral reflection by showing them the inappropriateness of their actions and the inconsistency of their beliefs. Moral admonition, in other words, is not at odds with rational instruction in Stoic theory, but a necessary preliminary to it, paving the way for the a theoretical understanding of why Stoic principles correspond with Nature's plan.

1. Moral Admonition in Hellenistic and Roman Philosophy

[10] A.A. Long, (2001:65) has rightly observed that the misleading notion of a 'diatribal style' has long halted scholarly progress in the study of ancient moral rhetoric. On this notion, cf. *infra*, pp.28-30.

To explain the context of Seneca's intervention, it will be helpful to consider the wider philosophical tradition in which he is operating and to discuss the fault lines in ancient philosophical discussions of the intersections between admonition, rhetoric, and the emotions. The difficulty of convincing ordinary individuals to adopt philosophical values, in fact, was often thematized in ancient philosophical texts. In particular, ancient philosophers often disagreed about the extent to which they could adopt the tools of rhetoric in order to exhort people towards the pursuit of philosophy.

In Plato's *Gorgias,* Socrates compares the rhetorician with the pastry chef, who prepares delicious treats that cater to his customers' appetites but corrupt their health; the philosopher, on the other hand, is akin to a doctor, who opposes his patient's appetites and often uses unpleasant remedies to heal them. The reactions of Socrates' interlocutors, however, dramatically show that most people will not readily submit to such a philosophical doctor but first need to be *persuaded* that they are sick and that his painful remedies will benefit them. The *Gorgias,* in fact, suggests that Socrates' lack of success in converting his interlocutors lies in the fact that he attempted to sway his interlocutors exclusively through rational, philosophical argument and refused to employ any form of rhetoric that would appeal to, and attempt to redirect, their appetites.[11]

In the *Phaedrus,* Plato appears to offer a partial corrective in this regard by sketching the outlines of a philosophical rhetoric. Socrates seems to admit that simply knowing the truth is not enough, but that it must be expressed in artful words, adapted to the peculiar characteristics of the interlocutor[12]. Even though the *Phaedrus*' rhetoric appear to be a psychologically informed kind

[11] The *Gorgias* is commonly read as a criticism of Socratic persuasion: cf. Klosko (1986, 1993), Scott (1999), Woolf (2000) and Moss (2007). As Moss points out (2007:246-7), the *Gorgias* mentions the possibility of a true rhetoric, though it presents it as an unrealized ideal (503a-b, 517a).

[12] *Phdr.* (259e – 264e). It ought to be emphasized that this philosophical rhetoric is not merely a sanitized version of

of dialectic, rather than a recognizable subtype of oratory, the new emphasis on address the *particular person*, and not just the intellect, entails a more holistic view of moral development and a recognition that the emotions are not inevitably disruptive forces, but can be educated and harnessed in an effort to turn aspiring philosophers towards greater self-knowledge.

The *Gorgias* and the *Phaedrus* represent two poles in the philosophical engagement with rhetoric that defined the parameters for later philosophers engaging with the art of rhetoric. Certain hardliners – primarily the early Stoics and the Cynics – took up the Gorgias's legacy and rejected rhetoric as a useless, even pernicious, instrument. Others, with Aristotle on the front line, continued the project of the *Phaedrus* and sought to put the tools of rhetoric to a philosophical use and to determine a way in which its power could be harnessed for moral purposes.

This philosophical engagement with rhetoric resulted in a body of shared admonitory practices, ranging from exhortation to moral criticism, which each school adapted to its own conception of human nature and philosophical development[13]. The creative exchange on this topic both within and between schools is evidenced by the spread of pedagogical manuals and discussions, ranging from Chrysippus' *Therapeutics* to Philodemus' *On Frankness,* several essays in Plutarch's *Moralia* and, much later, Christian handbooks such as Clement of Alexandria's *Paedagogus.* In addition, this sustained attention to pedagogical questions led to a new conception of the philosophical teacher as a director of souls, who, as Clarence Glad puts it, had a "recognized authority to command, cajole, admonish, pacify and console willing recipients under his guidance"[14].

Gorgianic rhetoric. First of all, the rhetoric that is being defended in the Phaedrus is not public oratory, but a type of communication practiced in the context of the philosophical education of individuals. Secondly, this form of rhetoric is not a "manufacturer of conviction involving belief but not knowledge about right and wrong" (*Gorgias,* 454e9) but focuses on representing *true* views in a persuasive way to a selected audience.

13 Malherbe (1986:11-17 and *passim*) speaks of a 'philosophical *koinè*. Cf. Stowers (1986: 91-152) and Glad 1995:1-101).

14 Glad (1995:55). Cf. Guillemin (1929, 1952, 1954, 1957).

Even as each school favored particular techniques and approaches, there was a broad consensus that moral admonition was a necessary preliminary to philosophical instruction, and that it ought to elicited feelings of desire for the moral good or aversion towards moral evil. In his description of his (fictional) philosophical conversion, Lucian writes that his teacher's words, after initially confusing him, in the end left him "proud and exalted, taking no more notice of trifles"[15]. Conversely, Plutarch argues that reprehensions ought to "penetrate like a biting drug". "Not to burn with shame in the soul" after being castigated by a teacher, he argues "is a notable sign of an illiberal nature in the young"[16].

2. Seneca on Admonition and the Emotions

At first sight, it would seem that Seneca ought to reject the approach Plutarch prescribes, as it seems to appeals to emotions that, from a Stoic point of view, could only be based on misguided beliefs. Indeed, Seneca repeatedly and explicitly endorses the Stoic view that the emotions can never be good or useful. In book I of *De Ira*, he assails Aristotle's belief that certain emotions, such as anger, can be useful as a spur for moral action: first, he argues that emotions can never be a trustworthy tool since they cannot be reliably brought under the control of reason. Secondly, he points out that the motivational pull of the emotions is superfluous, given that we are equipped with reason, which motivates us towards virtuous behavior on its own[17]. In *Letter* 85, Seneca

[15] Lucian, *Nigrinus* 3-7B, translation Malherbe (1986:57)

[16] Plutarch, *On Listening to Lectures* 46d, translation Malherbe (1986:60). Cf. Musonius Rufus (*Fragm.* 49 = Gell. *NA* V.1) who writes in a very similar vein that "[w]hen a philosopher is exhorting, admonishing, urging, scolding […] whoever it is that is doing the listening […] must necessarily shudder even as the philosopher speaks, and feel silent shame and joy and wonder, his expression and his feelings fluctuating this way and that, to the extent that the philosopher's palpation of both the sound and the diseased parts of his soul affects him and his conscience" (translation Trapp undated: p.12).

[17] *De Ira* I.17-18, cf. *Ep.* 116.8.

similarly dismisses the Peripatetic ideal of *metriopatheia* and concludes that "this middle ground is misleading and useless; it is as if someone were to say that we should be moderately insane or moderately ill"[18].

Notwithstanding this explicit endorsement of the Stoic ideal of *apatheia* and his rejection of the notion that the emotions can ever be good or useful, Seneca often uses a highly rhetorical approach that has been interpreted as a deviation from Stoic principles, inconsistent with his high-minded theoretical pronouncements. In *Letters* 94 and 95, his most detailed account of his moral pedagogy, he champions a variety of types of moral admonition: reminders (*admonitio*), persuasion and dissuasion (*suasio/dissuasio*), exhortation (*exhortatio/ adhortatio*), praise (*laudatio*), consolation (*consolatio*), reproof (*castigatio*), reproach (*obiurgatio*) and accusation (*denuntiatio*) [19]. Seneca's employment of such admonitory techniques has often seemed problematic to ancient as well as modern critics, who regard them as a violation of the strict Stoic position on rhetoric and the emotions[20]. Plutarch, for example, takes the Stoics to task for using admonitory techniques that appear to elicit their interlocutors' emotions:

> [O]ne can often see them [the Stoics] encouraging young people with praise and checking them with criticism. Of these, one is attended by delight, the other by distress. For criticism

[18] *Ep.* 85.9: *Falsa est itaque ista mediocritas et inutilis, eodem loco habenda quo si quis diceret modice insaniendum, modice aegrotandum.*

[19] *Ep.* 94.39, 49; *Ep.* 95.34, 65. Most of the scholarship on this pair of letters has focused on the question whether Seneca's approach is similar to that of modern rule-based systems of ethics, and largely overlooks the fact that Seneca not only defends precepts, but also argues for the necessity of a variety of other types of moral admonition. For a critical overview of the scholarship, cf. Schafer (2011).

[20] As Bellincioni (1978:174) has pointed out, all of the types of admonition Seneca recommends can be classified under what Roman rhetoricians called the *genus deliberativum* of rhetoric, which is aimed at either encouraging or discouraging a person from certain beliefs or actions. In his *De Oratore,* Cicero argues that forms of moral admonition such as reproof, exhortation and consolation are not part of any particular division of oratory but must be handled eloquently, and demand adaptability and a particular rhetorical register. He further points out that they are intimately connected with moral action and either "giv[e] impulse to any emotion of the mind, or, if the situation demands it, mitigate[e] it" (*De Or.* II. 50.6, III.118.7, III.211.4.)

> and blame bring about repentance and shame, of which one is a species of distress and the other of fear[21]

Modern scholars too often suggest that Seneca's employment of such admonitory techniques stems from his bent for rhetorical exaggeration. A second group of critics tend to view Seneca as a 'spiritual director' who was concerned primarily with pedagogical effectiveness rather than with theoretical consistency. A third set of scholars have tried to explain the apparent contradiction between Seneca's rhetoric and his philosophical commitments by arguing that he only aims to elicit *propatheiai* (the movements preceding emotions), not full-fledged emotions. A fourth influential theory is that Seneca's admonitory approach borrows from "unorthodox" developments in Stoicism, in particular the dualistic moral psychology of Panaetius and Posidonius.

In what follows, I will argue that each of the four explanations found in the scholarship fall short in explaining Seneca's admonitory approach and offer an alternative explanation that shows how Seneca is, in fact, working within a recognizably Stoic paradigm of moral therapy that was pioneered by Chrysippus.

3.1. Admonition as a Genre of Discourse

Much of the 20th century scholarship on Seneca's moral rhetoric, working within a strictly philological tradition, treats the admonitory aspects of Seneca's writing primarily as a genre of discourse rather than as an aspect of a philosophical approach. In particular, scholars often point to the diatribe, a type of free-form philosophical speech designed for wider audiences, as an

[21] *Idem,* 452c-d: Αὐτούς γε μὴν τούτους ὁρᾶν ἔστι πολλάκις μὲν ἐπαίνοις τοὺς νέους παρορμῶντας πολλάκις δὲ νουθεσίαις κολάζοντας, ὧν τῷ μὲν ἕπεται τὸ ἥδεσθαι τῷ δὲ τὸ λυπεῖσθαι. Καὶ γὰρ ἡ νουθεσία καὶ ὁ ψόγος ἐμποιεῖ μετάνοιαν καὶ αἰσχύνην, ὧν τὸ μὲν λύπη τῷ γένει τὸ δὲ φόβος ἐστί. (translation: Graver 2007:207).

inspiration for Seneca's stylistic choices[22]. Recent research, however, has convincingly shown that the diatribe as a genre is a modern construction that reifies a variety of tropes and conventions common to the rhetorical, satirical and philosophical tradition[23]. This reduction of Seneca's approach to stylistic or generic features effectively ignores the moral psychology and pedagogical principles underlying Seneca's approach and sidelined the philosophical questions it raises, in particular the question of how to justify forms of rhetoric appealing to the emotions within a Stoic framework[24].

Many scholars, in fact, content themselves with pointing out that Seneca uses both rational and irrational (or emotional) means without elaborating on what this entails or addressing the moral psychology underlying this claim[25]. Cancik, for example, argues that Seneca relies on a "theoretical-doxographic" register, which conveys rational arguments, and a "paraenetic" register, which uses "emotive means", without analyzing Seneca's own claims about his rhetoric or the emotions[26]. Bellincioni similarly writes that Seneca wants to affect the "irrational component" of the human soul, but does not say what this would entail[27]. This oversight is significant, given the profound ambiguity of the word irrational, which – in English as in Greek – can mean either that

[22] An influential source for this view is Oltramare (1926) who devotes a chapter of his book on *The Origins of the Roman Diatribe* to Seneca. Cf. further MacL. Currie (1966), Coleman (1974) Wright (1974). Cf. Alfonso Traina (1974), who writes about Seneca's "linguaggio della predicazione" and argues that "Seneca does not search the truth, he proclaims it" (1974:39).

[23] For a critical assessment of the scholarship, cf. Griffin (1976:13-15), Stowers (1981), Powell (1988:13-15), Grimal (1991: 240-1) and Wilson (2007:431).

[24] As Susanna Braund (2009:52) has noted, this narrow focus on the stylistic features of Seneca's communicative strategy has obscured the purposeful character of Seneca's rhetoric.

[25] Cf. also Alexandre (1979:138), who notes that Seneca's moral *sententiae*: "ont une action directe sur le sentiment et moyennant l'intervention de la nature produisent leur effet". Newman (1989:1489) similarly argues that "*sententia* provided the best material for emphasizing parallelisms and contrasts in order to emotionally affect the reader or listener". Hutchinson (1993:156) simply states that "the structure of [Seneca's] works of prose is […] often intended to make an emotional as well as an intellectual impact". Pare-Rey (2008:645) similarly notes that "une *admonitio* efficace doit passer, selon lui, par les deux voies que sont l'intellect et l'affect, sans quoi elle risque de s'en tenir aux froids syllogismes qui ne convainquent en rien"

[26] Cancik (1967:15-16).

[27] Bellincioni (1978:92), who talks about a *componento arazionale*.

something is *lacking* in reasoning or that is based on *faulty* reasoning. This distinction is especially important when discussing Stoicism, since the Stoics insisted that emotions are irrational only in the second meaning of the term, based on misguided reasoning, rather than qualitatively different from reasoning[28].

3.2. Eclecticism and Pragmatism

A second group of critics claim that Seneca's emphasis on moral admonition reveals that he is not so much a committed Stoic, but primarily acts as an eclectic 'spiritual director', who is more concerned with the therapeutic effectiveness of his arguments than with their theoretical "orthodoxy" and internal consistency[29]. Thomas Habinek, for example, argues that all of Seneca's philosophical works are part of a "mega-performance as moral exhorter" and should be situated within the "traditional upper-class Roman performative genre of moral exhortation"[30]. On Habinek's view, Seneca's "criterion of validation of exhortation is neither truth nor beauty, but effect", with the result that he struggles to develop a dogmatic approach within a hortatory framework[31]. In a similar vein, John Cooper has argued that Seneca relies so heavily on the "rhetorical, emotion-evoking devices of the spiritual director" that he forgets the goal of attaining "a full philosophical understanding of the reasons why the truths of Stoicism really are true"[32].

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[28] Galen exploits the ambiguity of the Greek term *alogon* to attack a supposed inconsistency in Chrysippus' intellectualist account of the emotions. On this, cf. Sorabji (2000:58). On the different meanings of the term irrational and their application to Stoic emotion theory, cf. Inwood (2005:43-44).

[29] For criticism of this tendency in the scholarship, cf. Roskam (2005:61-2) and Inwood (2007: xv).

[30] Habinek (1998: 138, 212) argues that "the social function of such exhortation is both to transmit the dominant ideology in readily comprehensible form [...] and to correlate specific instances of ethical choice with the general principles it prescribes" (1998:139). This argument overlooks the many ways in which Seneca questions, overrides or appropriates conventional Roman values. On this, cf. Roller (2001), Bartsch (2006) and *infra*. pp. 116-119 and 124-127.

[31] Habinek (1998:139-140).

[32] Cooper (2006:47-8). *Pace* Cooper, Seneca is not arguing against the usefulness of Stoic logic, or rational argument, *per se*, but rather argues that logical proof is useless in the early stages of a person's philosophical education, when

Pedagogical pragmatism, however, does not imply theoretical sloppiness or inconsistency, and the fact that Seneca uses rhetorical appeals to catch his addressees' attention and exhort them to the pursuit of wisdom by no means entails that he devalues rational argument. As Inwood rightly notes, the assumption that Seneca's works are 'merely" rhetorical and hortatory conflicts with the fact that Seneca does, in fact, offer sophisticated theoretical discussions *in addition to* the many admonitory passages which are often seen as his trademark[33]. Rather than neglecting theory altogether, Seneca believes – as I show in chapter 4 – that moral exhortation is a necessary preliminary to theoretical instruction, preparing an initially uninterested, recalcitrant or emotionally confused interlocutor for the pursuit of wisdom[34].

3.3. Admonition Eliciting Propatheiai

A third set of scholars has tried to explain the apparent contradiction between Seneca's rhetoric and his philosophical commitments by arguing that he only aims to elicit *propatheiai* (the movements preceding emotions). Mireille Armisen-Marchetti, for example, argues that Seneca's rhetorical appeals to the emotions can be justified in light of his claim that historical and fictional narratives affect us by eliciting *propatheiai* or pre-emotions, which only develop into full-blown emotions only after reason gives its assent[35]. On her view, Seneca distinguishes between *adfectio,* which is a harmless involuntary movement of the soul, and *adfectus,* a full-blown emotion caused

exhortation rather than logical argument is needed. Seneca clearly recognizes complementary roles for exhortation and rational explanation, as I show below on pp. 146-149. For a similar criticism, cf. Wagoner (2011:75).

33 Cf. Inwood (2007: xv-xvii).

34 As Inwood notes (2007: xvii), "[t]he role of guide and adviser is one that Seneca *adopts* to write the letters; it is apparently the voice which he often wishes to be heard first by his readers. But it does not follow that it represents his basic authorial motivation or that our philosophical understanding of the letters must begin from this alleged fact about Seneca".

35 Armisen-Marchetti (1989:46-52); cf. *De Ira* II.1-4.

by a proposition to which a person has given assent. As such, Armisen-Marchetti argues, Seneca's admonitory strategies do not aim to elicit full-blown emotions, but only harmless pre-emotions. Seneca's terminology, however, is hardly as clear-cut and consistent as Armisen-Marchetti implies[36].

A similar argument has been proposed by Gregory Staley, who argues that Seneca merely aims to elicit the *propatheiai* which "cannot really be harmful", but can still be "characterized by "a tendency in favor of a particular point of view"[37]. Given the involuntary character of the *propatheiai,* the agent is still fully in control and "can in the end judge their truth value". Staley himself rightly notes, however, that Seneca did not answer, or even ask, the question how such preliminary responses "can in any way be pleasurable or helpful to our emotional and moral well-being"[38]. In other words, appeals to *propatheiai* can have no meaningful consequences for moral progress, as they are not yet connected with a judgment that it is appropriate to act in a certain way[39]. This fact raises serious doubts about the validity not only of Staley's own argument, but about Armisen-Marchetti's as well[40].

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[36] Seneca's mention in *Ep.* 92.8 of a part of the soul that resides *in adfectionibus* does not refer to involuntary pre-emotions (*propatheiai*) but is clearly an attempt to render the Platonic notion of a *thumos.* Seneca, in fact, only uses the term *adfectio* five times in his corpus, mostly to refer to a 'feeling' in general terms (*Ben* IV.18.1; *Ep.* 57.1, 59.2, 92.8.3; *NQ* VI.24.4. The term does not even occur in *the Ira*, Armisen-Marchetti's primary source for this putative distinction: instead, Seneca uses the circumlocutions *praeparatio adfectus et quaedam comminatio* and *principia proludentia adfectibus* to refer to the *propatheia* (*De Ira* II.2.5, II.4.1).

[37] Staley (2010: 63, 74).

[38] Staley (2010: 75, 95).

[39] As Juliette Dross (2010: 153 n. 276) rightly points out, *propatheiai,* which have not yet been validated by rational assent, cannot stir up any meaningful *impetus* to action. Cf. Inwood (2005:41-63) who argues that the *propatheiai* are pre-rational movements of the soul that are "exempt from moral judgment" (43) and "do not involve what Seneca would consider voluntary commitment" (58).

[40] Dross believes that Armisen-Marchetti's interpretation might be saved if we accept Stevens' argument (2001) that Seneca recognizes a kind of preliminary impulses preceding our assent to impressions account. She herself, however, admits that such a reconstruction of a Senecan justification for therapeutic emotional appeals is "fragile and acrobatic" (2010:155) and concludes that the question of Seneca's justification of Seneca's for using emotional appeals remains open. In my view, however, Seneca's explicit statement that "there is never an impulse without assent of the mind" (*De Ira* 2.3.4) cannot be argued away. On this, cf. Inwood (1985: 176 ff., 287, ff.).

3.4. An "Unorthodox" Seneca?

Perhaps the most far-reaching, but also most common, interpretation of Seneca's approach to admonition is that he is influenced by "unorthodox" developments in Stoicism, in particular the supposedly dualistic moral psychology of Panaetius and Posidonius[41]. According to this long dominant interpretation, for which scholars find support in the writings of Cicero and Galen, Panaetius and Posidonius replaced Chrysippus' monist psychology with a Platonic part-based psychology, and recognized an irrational *(alogon*) or emotional (*pathètikon*) part of the soul. As a result, this argument goes, they modified the old ideal of *apatheia* and showed a new appreciation of methods of instruction and admonition that targeted the emotional part of the soul.

Albrecht Dihle, for instance, argues that Seneca's arguments about the uses of moral admonition in *Letter* 94 are heavily indebted to Posidonius and includes both "orthodox" arguments, appealing to reason, and "unorthodox" arguments, appealing to the emotions[42]. Dihle points out that the longest stretch of "unorthodox" argumentation in *Letter* 94 is introduced with a direct quotation from Posidonius, but omits to mention that Seneca, in fact, cites Posidonius in disagreement[43]. This indicates that, even though Seneca is engaging with Posidonius' work, he is at pains to highlight his own contribution. In addition, the supposed parallels between Seneca's discussion in *Letter* 94 and fragments of Posidonius' works, which Dihle enumerates without further discussion fail to support his claim that Posidonius' approach to admonition was

[41] The notion of a 'Middle Stoa' representing major innovations was pioneered by Schmekel (1892) and was the predominant view in the scholarship for much of the 20t century. Among recent scholars largely accepting it are Ian Kidd (1972, 1988, 1999), Brad Inwood (1993, reprinted in Inwood 2005:23-65), Anthony Price (1994:175-87) and Richard Sorabji (2000:93-132). For an overview of the older scholarship, cf. Hadot (1968:73-6).

[42] Dihle (1973:50) divides Seneca's argument unfolds as follows: §23, 25-6: orthodox, §27-28: unorthodox, §31-4, 36: orthodox, §40-46: unorthodox, §47-49: orthodox, §50-1: unorthodox.

[43] *Ep.* 94.38: *in hac re dissentio a Posidonio.*

"unorthodox" and that Seneca's arguments are directly borrowed from him[44].

A similar argument for a 'Middle Stoic' origin of Seneca's ideas about moral admonition has been put forward by Aldo Setaioli, in his influential essay on Seneca's style. Setaioli charts a gradual evolution in Stoic thinking about the usefulness of rhetoric and emotional appeals and argues that Diogenes of Babylon, Panaetius and Posidonius increasingly recognized the necessity of types of admonition that aimed not just at convincing reason but at obtaining an emotional loyalty to Stoic moral principles[45]. Setaioli's account, however, omits to explain how this "emotional loyalty" would be defined in Stoic terms and does not address the resulting contradiction between Seneca's alleged dualism and the fact that he often defends what Setaioli calls the "intransigent intellectualism" of Chrysippus[46].

Even apart from the particular problems with Dihle's and Setaioli's particular arguments, however, there is the larger question whether Posidonius and Panaetius did, in fact, adopt a dualistic moral psychology, and if so, whether Seneca adopted it. In recent decades, this long dominant view has been powerfully challenged. Teun Tieleman in particular has offered a forceful argument against the notion of a dualistic turn in Middle Stoicism, and has argued for a fundamental continuity in the Stoic school's basic doctrines.[47] On Tieleman's view, Panaetius and Posidonius did not adopt a Platonic, dualistic theory of the soul, but rather aimed to show that dualistic arguments could be redescribed in terms of a Stoic, monist psychology. He argues that, rather than adopting Plato's psychology, Panaetius and Posidonius interpreted Platonic psychology

[44] Dihle (1970:52n.13). Cf. appendix 1 for a detailed rebuttal of Dihle's claims.
[45] Setaioli (2001:120-155). The phrase *adesione sentimentale* occurs on p. 142.
[46] Setaioli (2001:141n152). I agree with Setaioli that Seneca's rhetoric aims to obtain his interlocutor's commitment and loyalty but about there being an irresolvable conflict between Seneca's commitment to rational argument and his admonitory approach.
[47] Tieleman (2003:198-288 and 2007). Tieleman builds upon previous work by Fillion-Lahille (1984) and John Cooper (1998, reprinted in Cooper 1999:449-85), but goes even further than them in denying any dualistic elements in Panaetius and Posidonius.

as an anticipation of Stoic theory[48]. The so-called Middle Stoics, then, were not so much radical innovators as flexible thinkers who attempted to find common ground between Stoics, Platonists and Aristotelians and show that Stoic theory could be defended even on the basis of a different understanding of human psychology and motivation. If we accept this view, the longstanding division between "orthodox" and "unorthodox" Stoics simply disappears[49].

Even scholars who accept the theory that the Middle Stoics introduced radical innovations in Stoic moral psychology, however, differ over the question whether Seneca accepted their innovations. In an influential essay on "Seneca and Psychological Dualism", Brad Inwood has forcefully attacked this common assumption. He convincingly proposes that, in texts such where Seneca entertains a dualistic point of view, he does so in order to show that his Stoic conclusions would hold even on the basis of a different moral psychology[50].

Scholars who concur with this basic point, such as Christopher Gill and Gretchen Reydams-Schils, differ over the question whether Seneca merely exploits Platonic concepts rhetorically "to make an essentially moral or ethical point" or "explor[es] genuine affinities" with Plato[51]. Detailed analyses of Seneca's 'Platonizing' passages, however, clearly show that he never actually endorsed views that conflict with Stoic psychological monism, and subordinates his engagements with Plato's views to Stoic arguments[52]. What is at stake here is the question why

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48 As Tieleman shows, this strategy of neutralizing rival doctrines by assimilating them to one's own was not at all uncommon in ancient philosophical disputes. In fact, he argues that Galen and Cicero simply attempted to turn the tables on Panaetius and Posidonius by describing their views in Platonic terms, thus representing their appropriation of Platonic ideas as a defection from orthodox, Chrysippean Stoicism.

49 Cf. *supra,* p.18, for Christopher Gill's that the Stoics often "highlighted similarities between Platonic and Stoic thought without seeing the two though-patterns involved as fundamentally opposed".

50 Inwood (2005: 23-65), discussing *Ep.* 92 and book II of the *De Ira*, among other texts.

51 Respectively: Gill (2006:98), Reydams-Schils 2010:196).

52 Inwood (2005). Levy (2007:179) criticizes Inwood's interpretation and maintains that Seneca's engagement with dualistic views shows a real tension in his thought between his commitment to Stoic rationalism and his realization that all is not rational in the world. Reydams-Schils (2010) criticizes Gill's and Inwood's interpretation of Seneca's dualistic claims as "mere metaphors, or rhetoric in the service of practical moral philosophy" and argues that "it does not address the question why Seneca chooses certain metaphors or rhetorical devices over others" but agrees that, even if Seneca "explor[es] genuine affinities" with Plato, he always "giv[e]s them a Stoic turn of thought"

Seneca believes admonition can help to recover a person's moral judgment: is it by manipulating an irrational part of the soul to support the right course of action – as Dihle, Setaioli and others suggest – or is it by convincing a unified rational soul that this course of action needs to be adopted? In what follows, I will show that this interpretation goes against the grain of Seneca's arguments and offer a different reading that puts Seneca firmly within the monist therapeutic tradition of Chrysippus.

4. An Alternative Approach: Admonition as Propaedeutic

Chrysippus' writings on therapeutic philosophy are unfortunately known only through fragments and testimonies in other authors, but what is left allows us to reconstruct a reasonably clear and coherent picture of his general approach[53]. As Pierluigi Donini has shown, Chrysippus' method of moral therapy similarly operates in two stages: 1) removing the judgment of appropriateness through admonition and precepts in order to dispel the actual emotion and 2) removing the mistaken value-proposition underlying the emotion through instruction in Stoic doctrines in order to prevent further emotional episodes from arising[54]. On Donini's view, the therapy of the emotions *stricto sensu* is completed after the first step, since moral error in and of itself does not bring about emotions[55].

(214) and "remains quite rooted in Stoic thought" (196). Notwithstanding this criticism, her argument that "Seneca and others use Plato "as a kind of propaedeutic device to underscore an essentially Stoic scale of values" (201), is ultimately similar to theirs.

53 Tieleman (2003) offers an admirably detailed and insightful reconstruction and interpretation of this important work. All of the translations of Chrysippus' *Therapeutics* cited in this dissertation are his.

54 In a fragment preserved in Stobaeus (*Ecl.* 2.7.2, p. 40 W), the Platonist Philo of Larissa similarly argues that the "patient" must be convinced that he is, in fact, sick, and must be encouraged to accept the remedies that will benefit him. Along with such protreptic arguments, the philosopher should apply therapeutic ones that remove pernicious, mistaken beliefs and introduce correct, beneficial ones.

55 As Donini (1995:319-320) rightly points out, there is a distinction between moral error accompanied by emotion and moral error without emotion and that the judgment concerning the appropriateness to act in a certain way is a *condition sine qua non* of an emotion. If this were not the case, people with misguided values (that is to, nearly all

The reason why a philosopher should not start the process of philosophical therapy with a lesson in Stoic theory, Chrysippus argues, is that the mind of a person who had suffered a recent emotional affliction is "swollen" and unreceptive to philosophical reasoning[56]. At this point the emotion has such a stranglehold over the person's mind that it simply cannot benefit from rational argumentation[57]. Chrysippus argued, for example, that it was pointless to admonish infatuated lovers who "reject the discourse as an untimely censor, unsympathetic to the affairs of love" [58]. In epistemological terms, Chrysippus argues that an occurent emotion prevents the mind from rational deliberation and from recognizing even obvious truths[59]. As such, Chrysippus and other Stoics often refer to this condition as blindness or madness[60].

When someone is in this condition, Chrysippus recommends that a philosopher should not directly contradict the beliefs underlying the emotion, but lead them to the insight that their emotional behavior is irrational and unhelpful. "When the inflammation of the affection has abated", he argues, "reason will […] set before the mind the irrationality of the affection" and thereby gain the upper hand[61]. In cases when his interlocutors were too stubborn or deluded to listen to Stoic arguments, Chrysippus would point out the inappropriateness of their emotional

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of humanity) would be constantly suffering from all emotions for as long as they hold their mistaken values.

56 *SVF* III.484, cf. Cic. *Tusc.* IV.29, 63.

57 In the *De Ira,* Seneca describes in detail how emotion overtakes the mind in this away: as the emotion is a judgment, it does not simply co-habit with reason but entirely transforms it. Specifically, it distorts the process of *oikeiosis* and prevents the soul from having the kataleptic or self-evident impressions that form the basis of the Stoic belief in moral progress (*SVF* III.390, cf. Tieleman (2003:180-5).). As a result, reason cannot be freed as long as this misguided judgment prevails (*De Ira* I.7.2-3, I.8.2-3)

58 *PHP* IV.6.29-32 = *SVF* III.475.35-39 (translation De Lacy, lightly modified).

59 *SVF* III.390. For a detailed analysis cf. Tieleman (2003:180-86). In the *De Ira,* Seneca describes in detail how emotion overtakes the mind in this away: as the emotion is a judgment, it does not simply co-habit with reason but entirely transforms it. On this cf. Konstan (*forthcoming*).

60 Chrysippus used the term 'insanity' as a synonym for 'blindness' (e.g. *SVF* III.478). On Stoic conceptions of insanity, cf. Pigeaud (1981: 234-372) and Graver (2007:109-32).

61 *PHP* IV.7.27 = *SVF* III.467: 4.7.26.1: καθ' ὃν λόγον οὐκ ἂν ἀπελπίσαι τις οὕτως τῶν πραγμάτων ἐγχρονιζομένων καὶ τῆς παθητικῆς φλεγμονῆς ἀνιεμένης τὸν λόγον παρεισδυόμενον καὶ οἱονεὶ χώραν λαμβάνοντα παριστάναι τὴν τοῦ πάθους ἀλογίαν"; cf. Voelke (1993:79).

behavior not just according to Stoic principles but also according to their own misguided values[62]. The underlying assumption of this approach is that even a person who is acting on the basis of misguided beliefs has not entirely lost their capacity for moral self-reflection, and can still be led to understand that their emotional behavior is inconsistent with their own values[63]. As Origen reports:

> Chrysippus […] wishes to cure the emotions as pressing on and troubling the human soul, preferably by means of arguments that seem sound to him but in the second and third instance even by means of doctrines which he does not hold: "For even if", he says, "there are three kinds of good things, even so the emotions have to be cured; but one should not at the moment of inflammation of the emotions bother about the doctrine which has previously won over the person troubled by the emotion: the available therapy should by no means at an inconvenient time be wasted on over-throwing the doctrines which have occupied the soul first […] Even if pleasure is the good and this is the view taken by the person controlled by the emotions, nonetheless he should be helped and it should be shown to him that even for those who consider pleasure to be the good and indeed the end any emotion is inconsistent".[64]

What Chrysippus recommends, in other words, is that a philosopher should start by working from *within* his patients' current value-system and exhort them to restrain their emotions for reasons internal to it – even if they are misguided – rather than for the reasons prescribed by Stoic theory[65]. This realization of inconsistency, he implies, will help to break the spell of the emotion and jump-

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[62] Origen, *Contra Celsum* VIII.51 (= *SVF* III.474), second text. Cf. Cic. *Tusc*. III.73 (= *SVF* III.486): *Chrysippus autem caput esse censet in consolando, detrahere illam opinionem maerenti, si se officio fungi putet iusto atque debito.*

[63] Cf. Tieleman (2003:169): "apparently, an appeal to inconsistency may still penetrate the emotion by which the Epicurean is controlled; his irrationality is not so complete as to preclude this possibility". This method is fundamentally similar to the Socrates' elenchus, which similarly aims to confront his addressees with "the gap between themselves and their idealized images of themselves" (Tarnopolsky 2010:108).

[64] Origen, *Contra Celsum* VIII.51 = *SVF* III.474, second text (translation T. Tieleman, adapted) : Ἀλλὰ φιλανθρωπότερον οἶμαι Κέλσου Χρύσιππον πεποιηκέναι ἐν τῷ περὶ παθῶν θεραπευτικῷ, βουλόμενον θεραπεῦσαι τὰ πάθη ὡς κατεπείγοντα καὶ ἐνοχλοῦντα τὴν ἀνθρωπίνην ψυχὴν προηγουμένως μὲν τοῖς δοκοῦσιν αὐτῷ ὑγιέσι λόγοις δευτέρως δὲ καὶ τρίτως κἂν τοῖς μὴ ἀρέσκουσι τῶν δογμάτων· «Κἂν γὰρ τρία», φησίν, «ᾖ γένη τῶν ἀγαθῶν, καὶ οὕτω θεραπευτέον τὰ πάθη, οὐ περιεργαζόμενον ἐν τῷ καιρῷ τῆς φλεγμονῆς τῶν παθῶν τὸ προκαταλαβὸν δόγμα τὸν ὑπὸ τοῦ πάθους ἐνοχλούμενον, μή πως τῇ ἀκαίρῳ περὶ τὴν ἀνατροπὴν τῶν προκαταλαβόντων τὴν ψυχὴν δογμάτων σχολῇ ἡ ἐγχωροῦσα θεραπεία παραπόληται». Φησὶ δὲ ὅτι, «Κἂν ἡδονὴ ᾖ τὸ ἀγαθόν, καὶ τοῦτο φρονῇ ὁ ὑπὸ τοῦ πάθους κρατούμενος, οὐδὲν ἧττον αὐτῷ βοηθητέον καὶ παραδεικτέον ὅτι καὶ τοῖς ἡδονὴν τἀγαθὸν καὶ τέλος τιθεμένοις ἀνομολογούμενόν ἐστι πᾶν πάθος ». Cf. Cic. *Tusc*. III.73 (= *SVF* III.486).

[65] As Cicero reports (*Fin.* IV.9.23), Panaetius adopted a similarly pragmatic approach.

start people's ethical self-reflection by making them recognize the inconsistency of their behavior[66].

Chrysippus' therapeutic approach, however, does not entail that he is entirely abandoning the "arguments that seem sound to him" and that his therapeutic effort can or should be disconnected from Stoic principles[67]. Rather, he simply argues that "the moment of inflammation of the emotions" is an "inconvenient time" for adducing such arguments. In a first phase, the "inflammation of the emotions" should be treated by pointing out the inappropriateness of the emotions even according to the values of the person suffering from them. *After* this preliminary step, however, the philosophical therapist can start offering sound rational arguments against the beliefs that actually triggered the emotion, based on Stoic ideas[68].

Unfortunately, we do not possess any examples of Chrysippus' admonitory approach in action and the references to his admonitory approach that we do posses largely stem from polemical sources that often contradict each other. On the one hand, Cicero famously argued that Chrysippus' *Rhetoric* is "required reading only for those who were bent on being mute." In a similar vein, Philodemus argues that Chrysippus merely censured the emotions, instead of convincingly visualizing their vicious consequences[69]. Other sources, however, suggest that Chrysippus did not shy away from the vehement, rhetorical kind of admonition often associated with later Stoics[70].

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66 Cf. Tieleman (2003:169).

67 Scholars such as Richard Sorabji have drawn far-reaching conclusions from this quotation, arguing that Chrysippus' approach could be detached from Stoic value-theory and used as a stand-alone form of cognitive therapy. Tieleman (2003:167) rightly expresses reservations about this reading.

68 Chrysippus' point is echoed in Seneca's *Letter* 94, which argues that it is pointless to offer philosophical precepts to people whose mind is completely blinded by emotion: *Nihil enim proficient praecepta quamdiu menti error offusus est: si ille discutitur, apparebit quid cuique debeatur officio. Alioqui doces illum quid sano faciendum sit, non efficis sanum (Ep.* 94.5, cf. *Ep.* 95.38).

69 Philodemus, *On Anger* cols. 1.21-27, 3.13, 4.15-16 Indelli (translation Glad 1995:119) Tsouna (2007:200-201, with n.6) argues that there is no reason to believe that Chrysippus belongs to those who '*only* censure but do little or nothing else about it (sc. the disease)' (I. 13–16), as Philodemus seems to suggest and even suggests that Philodemus "probably uses material from Chrysippus' Θεραπευτικός in the long diatribe section of *On Anger* (VIII. 16–XXXI. 23), which "sets-before-the-eyes" the horrors of anger and the desire for revenge".

70 Cf. Setaioli (2001:141n152), who talks about Chrysippus' "intransigent intellectualism".

Plutarch, for instance, argues that Chrysippus "does [not] use slender arguments against custom; but as if he were pleading, with some passion in himself stirs up the affections of others, telling his opponent that he talks foolishly and labors in vain."[71] Similarly, Fronto, in an attempt to show his pupil Marcus Aurelius that even his Stoic role-models did not shun rhetoric, notes that Chrysippus did not merely present and explain what Plutarch calls "slender arguments", but often adopted a dramatic, vivid style to amplify them as much as he could:

> Is he content to teach, to present the subject, to define and explain it? He is not; he amplifies it as much as he can, magnifies it, forestalls objections, repeats himself, postpones points and comes back to them, questions, describes, divides, brings in fictitious persons, fits his own speech to that of another person.[72].

Notwithstanding the critical undertones in Plutarch's suggestion that Chrysippus himself succumbed to emotion in criticizing the emotions of others, there is no reason to think that Chrysippus' rhetoric, used to amplify the point that a person "talks foolishly and labors in vain", is fundamentally at odds with his position on rhetoric, and that of his predecessors[73]. Rather, it is a straightforward application of his belief, discussed above, that a philosopher should initially confront his interlocutors by showing them the irrationality of their emotions in a way that will lead them to the awareness that their behavior is inconsistent and self-defeating[74]. After realizing

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[71] Cic. *Fin*. IV.7; Plut. *De Stoicorum Repugnantiis* 1036a: οὐδὲ γὰρ ψιλοῖς χρῆται τοῖς κατὰ τῆς συνηθείας ἐπιχειρήμασιν, ἀλλ' ὥσπερ ἐνδίκῃ μετὰ βάθους τινὸς συνεπιπάσχων μωρολογεῖν τεπολλάκις λέγει καὶ κενοκοπεῖν (Goodwin translation, *LCL*).

[72] *Aur.* 14 (pp 141-2, ed. van den Hout): *Num contentus est docere, rem ostendere, definire, explanare? Non est contentus, verum auget in quantum potest, exaggerat, praemunit, iterat, differt, recurrit, interrogat, describit, dividit, personas fingit, orationem suam alii accom<m>odat.*

[73] Seneca even argues that a philosopher can *pretend* to be angry when admonishing his interlocutors in this way, but should never actually be angry (*De Ira* II.17.1). Cf. *Off.* 1.136, in which Cicero writes that reproof (*obiurgatio*) sometimes requires a more rhetorical tone or voice but that this should be a last resort, and that "anger itself should be far from us". Even if Chrysippus *did* succumb to emotion, however, Plutarch's criticism is somewhat unfair, as Chrysippus never laid claim to sagehood.

[74] *SVF* III.467 = *PHP* IV.7.27: "as the emotional inflammation subsides, reason will sneak in and, as it were, take a stand and demonstrate the irrationality of the emotion". (*paristanai / paradeiknunai tèn tou pathos alogian*); cf. Voelke (1993:79). Cf. *Epict*. III.23.28-34, in which Epictetus clearly follows in Chrysippus' footsteps, arguing that exhortation consists in "show[ing] the individual, as well as the crowd, the warring inconsistency in which they are floundering around" (34).

this, the interlocutor will be in a better position to comprehend *why* his beliefs are misguided, and to adopt new, rational beliefs[75].

5. Seneca's Chrysippean approach

Seneca's approach to moral admonition is recognizably based on this Chrysippean approach of adapting one's arguments to each interlocutor's particular situation. In the *De Constantia*, for example, Seneca explicitly recognizes that "the truly wise man and the aspirant to wisdom will use different remedies": "those who are not perfected and still conduct themselves in accordance with public opinion", he argues "must bear in mind that they have to dwell in the midst of injury and insult; all misfortune will fall more lightly on those who expect it"[76]. In the *De Ira*, he similarly argues that philosophical therapy should be adapted to the condition of each individual and should ideally be framed in a way that points out the person's moral flaws by shaming them and appealing to their moral self-conception, rather than by directly opposing their mistaken values:

> [My approach] will use every available method to put rage to rest. If it is really forceful, it will instill a shame or fear in it that it will not be able to resist. If is is somewhat weaker, it will bring in pleasing or novel types of conversation and distract it with an eagerness to learn […] To one person you will say "See to it that your anger isn't a source of pleasure to your enemies", to another "See to it that you do not lose your greatness of mind and the reputation of strength you have in the eyes of many. By Hercules, I myself am indignant and can't find a way to diminish the suffering, but we must be patient; he will pay. Keep this in mind: when you can, you'll pay him back, and with interest for the delay.[77]

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[75] On the phase of explanation and argument that follows this propadeutic approach, cf. *infra* pp. 146-149.

[76] *De Const.* XIX.3-4 : *Diverso autem remedio utetur sapiens adfectatorque sapientiae. Inperfectis enim et adhuc ad publicum se iudicium derigentibus hoc proponendum est, inter iniurias ipsos contumelias que debere versari: omnia leviora accident expectantibus. Quo quisque honestior genere fama patrimonio est, hoc se fortius gerat, memor in prima acie altos ordines stare. Contumelias et verba probrosa et ignominias et cetera dehonestamenta velut clamorem hostium ferat et longinqua tela et saxa sine vulnere circa galeas crepitantia; iniurias vero ut vulnera, alia armis, alia pectori infixa, non deiectus, ne motus quidem gradu sustineat. Etiam si premeris et infesta vi urgeris, cedere tamen turpe est: adsignatum a natura locum tuere. Quaeris quis hic sit locus? Viri.* Cf. Cic. *Tusc.* III.79, which offers a similar recommendation.

[77] *De Ira* III.39.4-40.1: *Omni arte requiem furori dabit: si vehementior erit, aut pudorem illi cui non resistat incutiet aut metum; si infirmior, sermones inferet vel gratos uel novos et cupiditate cognoscendi avocabit […] Alteri dices 'vide ne inimicis iracundia tua voluptati sit', alteri 'vide ne magnitudo animi tui creditumque apud plerosque robur*

Seneca, however, goes further than Chrysippus – as far as we can tell from our fragmentary sources – in explaining *why* confronting recalcitrant interlocutors with the irrationality of their actions tends to act as a moral wake-up call[78] He does so, as I previously noted, by arguing that all human beings possess inborn "seeds of the virtues" – what the Stoics called the *aphormai* (starting-points). These seeds, Seneca argues, may be temporarily dormant, but can be activated by vividly evoking a conception of the moral good, and/or by pointing out how far a person falls short of this ideal[79]. In the chapters that follow, I will unpack in detail how this conception of inborn seeds of the virtues is a fundamental element in Seneca's pedagogical theory that allows him to explain the effectiveness of vivid imagery and even emotional appeals[80].

I will support this argument by analyzing two closely related letters (*Ep.* 94 and 95) in which Seneca discusses the moral psychology underlying his therapeutic approach. My aim in doing so is to show how the common argument that Seneca's admonitory approach in these letters relies on an "unorthodox" theory of the emotions lacks textual support. In *Letter* 94, Seneca makes a distinction between two modes of moral teaching, admonition and instruction:

> Virtue is divided into two parts - contemplation of truth and conduct. Instruction teaches contemplation and admonition teaches conduct. Right conduct both exercises and shows virtue. But if a person who is about to act is helped by persuasion, he is helped by

cadat. [alteri] Indignor mehercules et non invenio dolendi modum, sed tempus expectandum est; dabit poenas. Serva istud in animo tuo: cum potueris, et pro mora reddes.

[78] Cf. Tieleman (2003:169), who notes with a certain hesitation about Chrysippus' reasoning that "*apparently*, an appeal to inconsistency may still penetrate the emotion by which the Epicurean is controlled; his irrationality is not so complete as to preclude this possibility" (my emphasis).

[79] Seneca's belief that all human beings possess a fundamental capacity for rational moral thought that is rarely destroyed entirely is interestingly similar to the view, attributed to the Socrates of the *Gorgias,* that "morality is grounded so deeply within us that its truth is beyond argument" (McKim 1988:48).

[80] This conception, in fact, formed the theoretical basis for the Stoic belief in moral progress. Cf. *Ep.* 94.30, in which Seneca writes that precepts "add new points of view to our inborn ones and corrects depraved ones" (*novasque persuasiones adicit innatis et depravata corrigit*). As Staley (2010:91) has noted, Seneca's claim that we spontaneously acknowledge *(adgnoscimus)* the truth of moral *sententiae* is based on the Stoic notion of "common conceptions" (*koinē ennoia*) or "preconceptions" (*prolepsis*) which "cover truths that cognitive impressions, or at least sensory ones, do not transmit directly" (LS I.252).

> admonition as well. Consequently, if right conduct is necessary for virtue then admonition, which shows correct actions, is necessary as well[81].

In this letter and the next, he defends his two-pronged pedagogical approach against the criticisms of the dissident Stoic Aristo, who had famously argued that moral precepts, which tell a person what to do in particular kinds of circumstances, are useless, and that misguided persons simply needed instruction in Stoic doctrines (*decreta*), which will allow them to decide for themselves what to do in any circumstances[82]. Seneca agrees with Aristo that it is pointless to offer moral precepts when a person's mind is completely blinded by mistaken beliefs, but argues – following Chrysippus - that it is equally pointless at this point to offer them lessons in Stoic theory[83]. The task of philosophical admonition, on his view, is to find a remedy that will heal the afflicted person's moral eyesight and return it to its natural capacity, "for it is Nature that gives us our eyesight and he who removes obstacles restores Nature to her proper function"[84]. Seneca's argument that our capacity for moral judgment is given to us by Nature explains why he believes that admonition can be instrumental in restoring it to its full capacity. Responding to the question how admonition can help a person who is held down by wrong beliefs, he offers an argument that explains why the approach he shares with Chrysippus actually works:

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[81] *Ep.* 94.45: *In duas partes virtus dividitur, in contemplationem veri et actionem: contemplationem institutio tradit, actionem admonitio. Virtutem et exercet et ostendit recta actio. Acturo autem si prodest qui suadet, et qui monet proderit. Ergo si recta actio virtuti necessariaest, rectas autem actiones admonitio demonstrat, et admonitio necessaria est.*

[82] Cf. *Ep.* 94.1-2, in which Seneca defines precepts as specific instructions "appropriate to the individual case" compared with "the actual doctrines of philosophy and the definition of the highest good" which frames general philosophical principles for humankind at large.

[83] *Ep.* 94.5: *Nihil enim proficient praecepta quamdiu menti error offusus est: si ille discutitur, apparebit quid cuique debeatur officio. Alioqui doces illum quid sano faciendum sit, non efficis sanum.* Cf. *Ep.* 95.38. Seneca's depiction of Aristo as a hardliner who believed that instruction in Stoic doctrines was the only pedagogical approach permitted may not be entirely fair. Sextus Empiricus (*Adv. Math.* 7.12) tells us that Aristo of Chios believed in the usefulness of protreptic speech, which he describes as "an account that makes its hearers friends of virtue and strangers to wickedness, while denigrating the many attractive misdirections in between" (Cf. Jordan 1985, 316).

[84] *Ep.* 94.18: *Fateor huic non opus esse praeceptis ad videndum, sed remedio quo purgetur acies et officientem sibi moram effugiat; Natura enim vidimus, cui usum sui reddit qui removet obstantia.* Cf. *Ep.* 94.46 and 95 and *Ben,* V.5.26, discussed *infra,* p. 83.

> In this, namely, that he is freed from them; for his natural disposition has not been crushed but over-shadowed and kept down. Still, it keeps trying to lift itself up again, struggling against bad influences; but when it gets support and is helped by precepts, it grows stronger, as long as chronic illness has not corrupted or annihilated it[85].

Even the person who has succumbed to faulty reasoning, in other words, still possesses a natural inclination towards the good, which can be activated by means of a moral rhetoric that vividly demonstrates the inconsistency of our beliefs and actions[86]. Seneca's emphasis on the need for moral admonition in *Letters* 94 and 95 goes hand in hand with his repeated claim that instruction in Stoic doctrines is insufficient as an instrument to bring back our natural capacity for moral judgment. This point is brought out most explicitly in his criticism of the Stoics' penchant to employ syllogistic arguments in the early phases of moral therapy when a person still needs to be converted to Stoic principles[87]. In his *De Brevitate Vitae,* he approvingly cites the philosopher Fabianus who "used to say that we ought to fight against the emotions with an all-out attack, not with exactness, that the enemy's battle lines should be countered with an assault, not by inflicting petty wounds, and that sophistry is improper: for the emotions should be crushed, not pinched. "[88].

What many philosophers don't understand, Seneca argues, is that people's wrong beliefs and bad moral habits prevent them from recognizing and pursuing the good. In *Letter* 95, he explains that the necessity for "so many instruments and pill-boxes" is a result of the degeneracy

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[85] *Ep.* 94.31 : *'Si quis' inquit 'non habet recta decreta, quid illum admonitiones iuvabunt vitiosis obligatum?' Hoc scilicet, ut illis liberetur; non enim extincta in illo indoles naturalis est sed obscurata et oppressa. Sic quoque temptat resurgere et contra prava nititur, nacta vero praesidium et adiuta praeceptis evalescit, si tamen illam diutina pestis non infecit nec enecuit; hanc enim ne disciplina quidem philosophiae toto impetu suo conisa restituet.*

[86] Seneca's portrayal of the effect of moral *admonition* as arousing a shock (*Ep.* 94.28 *inpulsa;* 94.43 *ictus*), as self-evidently right, and as capable of moving even the most uneducated individuals is directly reminiscent of the Stoic description of *kataleptic* impressions, impressions that carry the hallmark of their own veracity. Cf. Sextus Empiricus (*Adv. Math.* 7.257 = LS 40K3), who describes a *kataleptic* impressions as "self-evident and striking" (ἐναργὴς καὶ πληκτικὴ). On this, cf. Brennan, discussed *supra* pp. 13-14.

[87] Cf. *infra,* pp. 133-35.

[88] *Brev. Vit.* X.1: *contra adfectus inpetu, non suptilitate pugnandum, nec minutis volneribus, sed incursu avertendam aciem, non probam cavillationem esse: animum contundi debere, non vellicari.*

of the times[89]. In earlier, simpler times, he argues, it "used to be easy to scold men who were slaves to drink and who sought out more luxurious food", but now, a philosophical adviser needs to try out every remedy available[90]. Though exceptional persons can sometimes "make great progress by obeying bare precepts alone", most others, as Seneca colorfully puts it, "must have the rust on their souls incessantly rubbed off"[91]. To the question why such "weaker spirits" have so much difficulty making moral progress, he answers that they are hindered by either recklessness or sloth. Removing such chronic habits, he argues, requires a variety of admonitory strategies:[92]

> [S]omething stronger [than theoretical instruction] is needed - something that will shatter these chronic ills; we must use doctrines in order to root out a deep-seated belief in wrong ideas. But doctrines will be effective only when we add precepts, consolation, and exhortation to them; by themselves they are ineffective[93].

Further on in *Letter* 95, Seneca restates that doctrines and precepts need to be supplemented by consolation, persuasion, and exhortation. The fact that he cites the authority of Posidonius to stress this point has led scholars to claim that such forms of moral admonition do not aim at pure reason and target an irrational part of the soul[94]. Seneca, however, is not arguing that instruction and

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89 *Ep.* 95.18: *tot ferramentis atque puxidibus*. Cf. *Ep.* 97.1 in which he contradicts the belief that "luxury, neglect of good manners, and other vices of which each man accuses the age in which he lives, are especially characteristic of our own epoch" and argues that they are simply the vices of mankind.

90 *Ep.* 95.32: *Expeditum erat obiurgare indulgentis mero et petentis delicatiorem cibum, non erat animus ad frugalitatem magna vi reducendus a qua paullum discesserat: nunc manibus rapidis opus est, nunc arte magistra*. Cf. *Ep.* 95.19.

91 *Ep.* 95.36: *'Quid ergo? Non quidam sine institutione subtili evaserunt probi magnosque profectus adsecuti sunt dum nudis tantum praeceptis obsequuntur?' Fateor, sed felix illis ingenium fuit et salutaria in transitu rapuit* […] *At illis aut hebetibus et obtusis aut mala consuetudine obsessis diu robigo animorum effricanda est.* On the notion that certain individuals have a natural receptiveness to virtue (*euphyia, eugeneia*), cf. *SVF* III 136, 229a, 366,716 and Brunt (2013:170). Cf. also *Ep.* 52.4, in which Seneca similarly suggests that there is a kind of persons "who can be forced and compelled to righteousness" and *Ben.* V.25.5, in which he writes that "[f]or a few men their own conscience is their best guide; next come those who return to the right path when admonished; these should not be deprived of a leader."

92 *Ep.* 94.21, 25, 37, 39, 49; *Ep.* 95.34,65.

93 *Ep.* 95.34: *In hac ergo morum perversitate desideratur solito vehementius aliquid quod mala inveterata discutiat: decretis agendum est ut revellatur penitus falsorum recepta persuasio. His si adiunxerimus praecepta, consolationes, adhortationes, poterunt valere: per se inefficaces sunt.* On precepts, consolation, and exhortation as forms of *paraenesis*, cf. *supra,* p. 22.

94 Laffranque (1965-7: 194), Dihle (1977), Setaioli (2000:140-1).

admonition appeal to different parts or aspects of the soul. Rather, he is simply saying that when a person does not respond to plain, logical arguments, philosophers should address the particulars of a situation in vivid terms. As he points out, Posidonius particularly defended a method named *ethologia* or *characterismos,* which "presents the signs and marks of each virtue" in order that "similar conditions might be told apart" [95].

Scholars often claim that Posidonius' argument that only vivid descriptions can succeed in "moving the irrational" (*to alogon*) entails that such descriptions somehow appeal to an irrational part of the soul[96]. But as Teun Tieleman points out, Posidonius' term *to alogon* is "neutral with regard to the number and ontological status of the sections into which the soul is divided"[97]. Rather than reading it as shorthand for to *alogon meros,* then – as Galen does – we can interpret it simply as "that which is irrational", i.e. based on faulty *reasoning*[98]. This is consonant with the Stoic view that the emotions are not events external to reason, but perversions of reason itself brought about by faulty value judgments.

Similarly, Seneca's explanation of the power of admonition does not point to an irrational part of the soul. Rather, he writes that detailed descriptions of particular virtues and vices aim to

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[95] *Ep.* 95.65: *Posidonius non tantum praeceptionem […] sed etiam suasionem et consolationem et exhortationem necessariam iudicat; his adicit causarum inquisitionem, aetiologian quam quare nos dicere non audeamus, cum grammatici, custodes Latini sermonis, suo iure ita appellent, non video. Ait utilem futuram et descriptionem cuiusque virtutis; hanc Posidonius 'ethologian' vocat, quidam 'characterismon' appellant, signa cuiusque virtutis ac vitii et notas reddentem, quibus inter se similia discriminentur.*

[96] *EK* 162 = *PHP* 5.6.24-26: πῶς γὰρ ἄν τις λόγῳ κινήσειε τὸ ἄλογον, ἐὰν μή τινα ἀναζωγράφησιν προσβάληται αἰσθητῇ παραπλησίαν ("You see, how could you move the irrational rationally unless you thrust before it a mental picture similar to one you can see?" translation Edelstein/Kidd, lightly modified). In his commentary, Kidd (1989: 578-79) argues that Posidonius' approach depends upon the notion that emotions are "caused by the movements of the irrational aspects of the soul, which are distinct from the rational aspect".

[97] Tieleman (2003:223)

[98] As Tieleman (2003:228) shows, it is Galen, not Posidonius, who repeatedly uses the term *meros* (part) in his discussion of Posidonius' arguments, thereby assimilating them to his own Platonic moral psychology. If Edelstein & Kidd's translation of λόγῳ as 'rational' is correct, the resulting expression "move the irrational rationally" would be a further indication that this form of admonition is not irrational, but simply a way of conveying rational truth in a way that actually "moves the irrational", that is to say, changes it by confronting it with a compelling representation. Alternatively, as Elizabeth Asmis suggested in personal communication, λόγῳ here could simply mean 'by speech'.

clarify the distinction between the two. *Ethologia*, in other words, serves to perfect rational discernment rather than to habituating an irrational part of the soul, and is fundamentally just a form of instruction by different means, as Seneca points out:

> [F]or he who instructs says, "do those things if you want to be self-controlled", while he who describes says, "a self-controlled man is one who does these things, who abstains from these things". Do you ask what the difference is? One gives instructions for virtue, the other a model[99].

Seneca in conclusion, does not aim to train an irrational part of the soul, but simply aims to *show* rather than explain why actions are good or bad. In rhetorical terms, what distinguishes teaching from admonition is the quality of *enargeia,* variously translated as vividness or self-evidence[100]. Other passages in *Letters* 94 and 95 confirm that Seneca does not think of admonition as an irrational process, but as a way of conveying the truth in a direct and forceful manner[101]. Even though he distinguishes admonition from teaching, he clearly states that is a way of activating *knowledge*:

> Advice is not teaching; it merely engages the attention and rouses us, and concentrates the memory, and keeps it from losing grip. We miss much that is set before our very eyes. Advice is, in fact, a sort of exhortation. The mind often tries not to notice even that which lies before our eyes; we must therefore *force upon it the knowledge* of things that are perfectly well known [...] Hence, you must be continually brought to remember these facts; for they should not be in storage, but ready for use. And whatever is wholesome should be often discussed and often brought before the mind, so that it may be not only familiar to us, but also ready to hand.[102]

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[99] *Ep.* 95.65: *Haec res eandem vim habet quam praecipere; nam qui praecipit dicit 'illa facies si voles temperans esse', qui describit ait 'temperans est qui illa facit, qui illis abstinet'. Quaeris quid intersit? Alter praecepta virtutis dat, alter exemplar.*

[100] On the notion of *enargeia* in Stoicism cf. Frede (1983), Lefebvre (2007), Dross (2010), and Ierodiakonou (2012). Dross convincingly argues that the Stoics gradually merged a philosophical and a rhetorical conception of *enargeia,* which surbordinated rhetorical effectiveness to philosophical truth.

[101] Cf. Armisen-Marchetti (2006) who discusses the notion of visual directness in Seneca's conception of admonition.

[102] *Ep.* 94.25-6: *'Quid prodest' inquit 'aperta monstrare?' Plurimum; interdum enim scimus nec adtendimus. Non docet admonitio sed advertit, sed excitat, sed memoriam continet nec patitur elabi. Pleraque ante oculos posita transimus: admonere genus adhortandi est. Saepe animus etiam aperta dissimulat; ingerenda est itaque illi notitia rerum notissimarum […] Itaque subinde ad memoriam reducendus es; non enim reposita illa esse oportet sed in promptu. Quaecumque salutaria sunt saepe agitari debent, saepe versari, ut non tantum nota sint nobis sed etiam parata.* Cf. Mitsis (1993:297). As Bellincioni, *ad loc*, points out, *versari* is a technical term in Seneca's conception of psychagogy (cf. *Ep.* 49.9, 23.4, 42.9, 62.1, 13.13, 24.15). On the notion that precepts should be "ready to hand"

Similarly, immediately after arguing that recovering a person's moral eyesight requires a variety of different remedies, he adds: "If we want to restrain people and wrest them away from the evil things that hold them captive they need to learn what is evil and what is good"[103]. In order to obtain this effect, a philosopher should resort to a variety of rhetorical figures. In *Letter* 59, Seneca explains that a philosopher should resort to metaphors and similes "as props for our weakness, to bring both speaker and listener to the matter at hand"[104]. The reason for this weakness, he adds, is that people are deeply affected by their habituated vices and often lack the energy, faith and motivation to surmount them.[105]

In *Letter* 75, a programmatic letter outlining the contours of a Stoic moral rhetoric, Seneca similarly writes that he would ideally prefer his letters to be as spontaneous and easy-going as his everyday speech[106] "If it could be done" – an explicitly counter-factual claim– he would show rather than tell Lucilius what he thinks:

> I want my letters to be unaffected and easy, as our talk would be if we were sitting down or walking together, with nothing far-fetched or artificial. If it could be managed, I would rather show than tell what I think. Even if I were debating, I would not stamp my foot or wave my arm or raise my voice, but leave that sort of thing to orators, satisfied if I had conveyed my meaning to you, without adorning it or making it colloquial. The one thing I would really like to prove to you is that I believed everything I said, and not only believed it but was committed to it.[107]

(*procheiron*), cf Rabbow (1954:325).

[103] *Ep.* 95.34: *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.*

[104] *Ep.* 59.6 *: ut inbecillitatis nostrae adminicula sint, ut et dicentem et audientem in rem praesentem adducant*. As Tieleman (2003:186) notes, weakness (*arrostèma*) is a technical term in Stoicism for the lack of physical 'tension' of the soul (*SVF* III.471)

[105] *Ep.* 59. 9-13. Cf. *Ep.* 94 and 95, in which he repeatedly calls this weakness blindness or *inertia*.

[106] On this letter, cf. Mazzoli (1991: 183-189) and Setaioli (2000:119-120 and 128-29), who points out similarities with Diogenes of Babylon's comments on philosophical style.

[107] *Ep.* 75.1-2 : *Qualis sermo meus esset si una desideremus aut ambularemus, inlaboratus et facilis, tales esse epistulas meas volo, quae nihil habent accersitum nec fictum. Si fieri posset, quid sentiam ostendere quam loqui mallem. Etiam si disputarem, nec supploderem pedem nec manum iactarem nec attollerem vocem, sed ista oratoribus reliquissem, contentus sensus meos ad te pertulisse, quos nec exornassem nec abiecissem. Hoc unum plane tibi adprobare vellem, omnia me illa sentire quae dicerem, nec tantum sentire sed amare.*

As it is, however, Seneca must resort to rhetoric in order to "show" what he wants to convey as vividly as he can – an approach that is no different from Chrysippus'[108]. Though he admits that a rhetorical approach is, a sort of *pis-aller*, he insists that it can be used responsibly and proceeds to sketch out a rhetoric that could be justified from a Stoic point of view. The first requirement of this Stoic rhetoric is sincerity: "let us say what we feel and feel what we say; let speech harmonize with life"[109]. Secondly, its aim should be therapeutic effectiveness rather than stylistic splendor. Seneca insists, however, that this does not mean that philosophical speech should be "meagre and dry": if eloquent presentation can be added without much effort, he believes there is no harm in it[110]. Seneca, in other words, is arguing that a philosopher's speech can, and should, have the rhetorical quality of vividness without yielding to the frivolous excesses of traditional rhetoric, which mostly aims to delight the ear[111].

The reason why vivid description has such an immediate, forceful impact on a non-wise interlocutor is its personalized concreteness. As Amy Olberding has argued in her insightful essay on Senecan death scenes, the hortatory style Seneca proposes is intended to help the reader understand in a visceral way how the general truths of Stoicism apply to *them*, in their particular situation. As she puts it:

> [S]eneca recognizes that the general truths yielded by abstract reasoning may be endorsed without our thereby sanctioning their import in the particular case. I may well grant that death is not an evil but never apply this insight in the case of *my* death. By providing dramatic examples of death, Seneca invites empathetic apprehension of the felt personal

[108] Cf. *supra,* p. 38, which clearly indicates Chrysippus' belief that admonition should show (note the term παραδεικτέον) rather than explain why a particular behavior is inconsistent and harmful.

[109] *Ep.* 74.4: *Haec sit propositi nostri summa: quod sentimus loquamur, quod loquimur sentiamus; concordet sermo cum vita.*

[110] *Ep.* 75.3: *Non mehercules ieiuna esse et arida volo quae de rebus tam magnis dicentur* [...] *5: Non delectent verba nostra sed prosint. Si tamen contingere eloquentia non sollicito potest, si aut parata est aut parvo constat, adsit et res pulcherrimas prosequatur.*

[111] Cf. *Ep.* 94.25-26, discussed in chapter 4, which strongly emphasizes vividness, and the contrast Seneca draws between the frivolous rhetoric of the Serapio and the authentic philosophical rhetoric of Fabianus.

> quality of death. He obliges the reader to apply the general to a particular and investigate her responses as she imaginatively identifies with the suffering he describes[112].

Olberding's argument goes to the heart of Seneca's argument against Aristo and others who think that a logical presentation of Stoic doctrines is sufficient to lead people to the straight and narrow. What such philosophers don't understand, Seneca argues (along with Chrysippus), is that a person who is blinded by mistaken beliefs needs to be shocked out of his moral complacency, and shown why the truths of Stoicism matter to him or her personally.

6. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have shown that Seneca's employment of a variety of forms of moral admonition, ranging from exhortation to shaming criticism, relies on his belief that a person who does not yet accept Stoic principles or has temporarily strayed from them is more likely to benefit from vivid descriptions of particulars than from theoretical instruction. Though scholars have often argued that Seneca's approach to moral admonition is the product of his eclecticism, his "diatribical" style, or of supposedly unorthodox influences, I have shown that there is nothing in his works that supports such an interpretation and that an alternative, much simpler account can be constructed.

Following Chrysippus, Seneca explains that a person who is morally blinded lacks the capacity to 'see' the truth of Stoic theory. Hence, the philosopher's first task is to heal this person's moral eyesight, that is to say, remove whatever errors are currently preventing her from realizing the truth of Stoic principles. To support this effort, Seneca argues that a philosopher can employ the stylistic tools of conventional rhetoric (such as *sententiae,* vivid descriptions, and *exempla*) as

[112] Olberding (2008:133).

long as they are put in the service of the truth. Though the extent of Seneca's engagement with rhetoric has often been described as an innovation in Stoicism (or even as an "unorthodox" aberration), there are clear indications that Chrysippus already recognized the need for a highly rhetorical register in dealing with recalcitrant and misguided interlocutors. Seneca's admonitory approach, in sum, should be read as a development of a properly Stoic concern with therapeutic philosophy, rather than as products of an inconsistent or "unorthodox" approach.

In the next four chapters, I will discuss in greater detail how Seneca's engagement with Chrysippus' therapeutic approach resulted in a wide-ranging body of admonitory techniques that aimed to jumpstart his interlocutor's moral inclinations either by confronting them with the inappropriateness of their actions (or the actions of others) or by portraying the splendor of the moral good through pithy *sententiae* or exalted *exampla.* In each chapter, I will show how Seneca believes this activation of his interlocutor's inborn moral inclinations is paired with a feeling-component that, rather than being an emotion *stricto sensu,* can be described as a prelude to the *eupatheiai* of the Stoic sage. As such, Seneca indicates how the path towards wisdom does not confront the *proficiens* with a mysterious chasm between foolishness and wisdom, as some of our sources imply, but represents a gradual path punctuated by intimations of the good[113].

Appendix: A refutation of Dihle's arguments for a Posidonian origin of Seneca's therapeutic approach in *Letter* 94

(1) Dihle (1973: 52:n11a) suggests that the argument in §13 and §36, which relies on the

[113] Stobaeus, in his discussion of Stoic paradoxes, presents the radical view that fools cannot benefit from admonition or instruction (*SVF* III.682), but, as Brunt has pointed out, this must be a misrepresentation of the Stoic view, as it is clearly is at odds with Chrysippus' statement that proficiens can learn (*SVF* III. 223); what Stobaeus means is more likely that fools *who are unwilling to learn* or uncommitted to practicing what they learn, can not profit from admonition or instruction.

Posidonian conception that the human soul contains inborn σπέρματα τῆς κακίας, is at odds with the argument in §29 and §55, where Seneca writes "you are mistaken if you think that our errors are born along with us" (*erras si existimas nobiscum vitia nasci*). The contradiction is, in fact, non-existent: in §13 Seneca writes that people may go wrong because "there is in the soul an evil quality *which has been brought about by wrong opinions"*, that is, an evil quality which is acquired, not inborn. In §36, Seneca writes that "if we have removed false opinions, insight into practical conduct does not at once follow", but this does not amount to an endorsement of the belief in σπέρμα τῆς κακίας. Rather, it merely acknowledges the need for further moral instruction, as I argue in chapter 4.

(2) Dihle (1973:52n12) argues that both Posidonius and Seneca think that moral education begins with the irrational part of the soul, pointing out a parallel between Galen *PHP* p. 445 Mueller (= 322.30-324.35 De Lacy = EK 31) and Sen. *Ep.* 94.40 ff., 51 and *De Ira* II.18-19. Both *De Ira* II.18 and *Ep.* 94.51 mention the need to tend to the souls of the young, but neither of them even hints at irrational forms of habituation or a belief in parts of the soul.

(3) Dihle (1973:52n13) compares Galen p.451ff. Mueller (= EK 187D and EK 168 = De Lacy 328.13-330.21) with *Ep.* 94.28 and 47 and claims that Seneca believed in the possibility of influencing the irrational part of the soul. But again, the supposedly parallel passages in fact deal with different subjects. Posidonius, in EK168, is talking about "regimen of rhythms, modes and exercises", not about verbal moral admonition, which is what Seneca discusses.

(4) Dihle adduces Galen p. 392 Mueller (= De Lacy 280.30 – 282.10 = EK 165A), in which Posidonius writes that a "fresh opinion […] suddenly hits us, it knocks us off balance and displaces

our old judgments", as a parallel to *Ep.* 94.40ff. In *Ep.* 94.43-4, Seneca does say that *sententiae* bring about a certain visceral shock (*ictus*), but, rather than linking it to the 'freshness' of the beliefs expressed by the *sententia*, he explains this effect by pointing to the fact *sententiae* touch the inborn *semina virtutum* within us.

Chapter 2: Shaming Criticism and Moral Progress

As a practicing Stoic, Seneca was dedicated to helping friends, family members, and others discover the truths of Stoic philosophy and apply them to their own lives. In many cases, his attempt to offer moral counsel was met with interest and enthusiasm, as in the letters to Lucilius or the *De Tranquillitate Animi,* a work that – if we are to believe the introduction – was actively solicited by his friend Annaeus Serenus[1]. Other interlocutors however, such as his friends Marcellinus or Marullus, resisted his well-meaning counsel and ignored his philosophical arguments[2]. As we saw in the previous chapter, Seneca believed that a philosopher should respond to such difficult cases by using a variety of admonitory techniques in order to rid his interlocutors of their misguided beliefs and bring back their capacity for moral reasoning.

Among the admonitory strategies he mentions in *Letter* 94 are *obiurgatio, castigatio,* and *denuntiatio* – severe forms of moral criticism that aim to show his stubborn addressees that their actions are shameful and based on inconsistent beliefs[3]. Shaming criticism, was a commonly accepted element of both Hellenistic philosophical pedagogy and Roman aristocratic interaction. Handbooks on rhetoric, epistolary communication and philosophical pedagogy show that this therapeutic criticism ranged from mild admonition to stern reproach, and discuss their applicability to different types of interlocutors and situations[4]. The various types of shaming criticism were eventually codified, with an increasing proliferation of variations and degrees as a result[5].

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1 Motto & Clark (1993:142, 149) suggest that Serenus, with his oddly topical name, "represents a trenchant dramatization of the absence of tranquility" and is "merely a thin screen, an *alter ego* and a disguise for the Philosopher himself".

2 Cf. *infra*, pp. 75-6, 101.

3 *Ep.* 94.35, 39.

4 Cf. Glad (1995), esp. pp. 69-101.

5 Stowers (1986:133), cf. Glad (1995:305-310). Demetrius' *On Epistolary Types* lists seven forms of moral criticism, ranging in severity from admonishing to threatening. Clement of Alexandria, in his *Paedagogus,* discusses no less than twelve different types (*Paed.* I.9).

Despite its commonness in the philosophical and rhetorical tradition, the use of shaming criticism appears at first sight to conflict with Seneca's Stoic belief that appeals to the emotions can never be beneficial, not even for therapeutic reasons, since the emotions of the ordinary person are by definition based on misguided value judgments[6]. Seneca, in fact, is highly critical of individuals who are overly concerned with their reputation and act in order to avoid the criticism of their peers[7]. This apparent contradiction between Seneca's admonitory approach and his theoretical commitments a Stoic has received only scant attention in the scholarship[8].

Most of the criticism simply represents this approach as inconsistent with Stoic moral psychology, or as an as aspect of Seneca's penchant for rhetorical excess, without offering an in-depth investigation of its therapeutic goals or psychological underpinnings[9]. The severity of Seneca's consolatory approach has even lead scholars such as Marcus Wilson to question the sincerity of his therapeutic intentions altogether[10]. Scholarship that *does* address the therapeutic uses of shaming in Stoicism, on the other hand, has focused almost exclusively on the early Stoics and Epictetus and has largely ignored Seneca's reflections on this topic[11].

This chapter and the next aim to fill this gap by offering the first sustained discussion of the social, rhetorical and psychological aspects of Seneca's employment of shaming criticism. My main claim is that Seneca creatively appropriates both philosophical and traditional aristocratic

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6 Cf. *supra* pp. 26-7, pp. Cf. Wray (2015:201), who notes that "the version of shame [Seneca] enjoins sounds like a kind of experience Stoics are supposed to avoid".

7 Cf. *infra*, pp. 70-72.

8 An exception is Wray's essay on "Seneca's Shame" (2015), which focuses primarily on Seneca's tragedies.

9 Cf. *supra,* pp. 28-36. Cf. Henderson 2005:1, 43), who characterizes Seneca's therapeutic approach as a "cold-turkey treatment" featuring an "interminable monastic barrage of ribbing, nagging, and flaying of self, friend, and all humanity".

10 Marcus Wilson similarly describes Seneca's consolation to Marullus (*Ep.* 99) as "an impassioned attack on passion; a non-consolatory consolation in which traditional consolatory motifs abound but the intention to console is denied" (1997:65-6).

11 For discussions focused on Epictetus, cf. Bonhöffer (1890:301-11), Kamtekar (1998) and Cooper (2004) and Brennan (1998 and 2005). Margaret Graver (2007) devotes a chapter to the problem of "progressor pain" (ch.9) but focuses largely on Chrysippus' argument, as reported in Cicero's *Tusculan Disputations.* Seneca only receives a brief mention (pp. 208-9).

modes of shaming criticism, and signals how this approach can be justified within a Stoic framework. He does so by arguing that shaming criticism is a preliminary approach, designed to reawaken his addressees' moral inclinations and exhort them to abandon their emotions or vices. Seneca, in fact, builds upon Chrysippus' argument that a philosopher should approach recalcitrant interlocutors by confronting them with the inconsistency of their beliefs and actions. He goes beyond Chrysippus, however, by arguing that this approach works by eliciting feelings of *pudor* and *verecundia,* and by explaining that even the wish to *appear* good, is an expression of our inborn inclination to *be* good.

This chapter is divided into five parts. After a brief overview of the semantic ranges of Greek and Latin words inhabiting the semantic field of the modern English terms "shame" or "sense of shame", I discuss how shaming criticism was used both as a pedagogical tool in ancient philosophy and as a common aspect of Roman aristocratic interaction. Secondly, I discuss why this form of admonition is theoretically problematic for Stoics such as Seneca, and how he and his fellow Stoics address the theoretical challenges it involves. Thirdly, I analyze of a selection of passages in which Seneca argues that shaming criticism can be helpful as a way of jumpstarting a person's moral self-awarenes, as long as that person's moral inclinations are still intact. Finally, I show how he justifies this approach by arguing that feelings of *pudor* are ultimately expressions of our inborn attraction towards the moral good.

1. Greek and Roman Cognates of "Shame"

As recent scholarship on ancient emotions has shown, the semantic fields of Greek, Latin and English emotion-words almost never neatly correspond to each other[12]. The Greek *aidôs and aischunè,* the Latin *verecundia and pudor,* and the English *shame and guilt* all possess their own culturally specific connotations, expressions, and associated feeling-tones.

Greek writers often the terms *aidôs* and *aischunè* more or less interchangeably[13]. The main difference between them is that *aidôs* is always described as anticipating disapproval rather than reacting to it, whereas *aischunè* can refer both to the disposition to feel ashamed and the occurent feeling of being ashamed[14]. Another distinction is that *aidôs* always preserved its archaic, poetic ring and its association with a virtuous disposition, whereas *aischunè* was the regular prosaic word in Classical Greek[15]. As Konstan points out, this distinction in status is apparent from the fact that philosophers and rhetoricians commonly classified *aischunè* as a *pathos,* whereas the status of *aidôs* was always more ambiguous[16].

The Latin words *pudor* and *verecundia* have been the object of several studies[17]. Just as with the Greek *aidôs* and *aischune*, *pudor* and *verecundia* are often used in similar contexts and Roman authors shows a clear awareness of their similarity[18]. Perhaps the most important distinction between the two terms is that *pudor* has a far wider semantic field than *verecundia.*[19].

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12 Konstan (2003 and 2006: 3-41), Kaster (2005).
13 Cairns (1993:415).
14 Konstan (2006:95).
15 Cairns (1993:415)
16 Konstan (2006: 95-6).
17 Lossman (1962), Stahl (1969), Vaubel (1970), Kaster (2005), Thomas (2007). In what follows, I will mostly rely on the two most recent studies, by Kaster and Thomas, which are more theoretically sophisticated than the older works, even as they adopt very different approaches.
18 Thomas (2007:438). Kaster's analysis of emotional scripts (2005:61-65) suggests a more limited overlap between the two than Thomas' semantic analysis.
19 Thomas (2007:438)

In philosophical texts, in particular Stoic ones, *pudor* often has an irrational ring to it, which makes it the counterpart of the Greek *aischune*[20]. *Pudor* is typically conceived as coming from without, suddenly imposing itself on the subject, and is seen as having a stronger affective force than *verecundia*[21]. As Ducos puts it, *pudor* expresses a movement of aversion whereas *verecundia* suggests an intellectual apprehension in which reflection and calculation play an important part[22]. An important similarity between the Greek and Roman terms exists in the fact that *pudor* can be both prospective and retrospective, whereas *verecundia* is always conceived as prospective[23]. Like *aidôs* in Greek, *verecundia* is disproportionally frequent in philosophical texts[24]. According to Stahl, however, the Greek *aidôs* implies a stronger emphasis on the opinion of others than the Roman conception of *verecundia*[25].

2. Shaming Criticism in the Philosophical Tradition

As "emotions of self-assesment" – a term I borrow from Gabriele Taylor – *pudor* and *verecundia,* are of obvious interest to philosophers who aim to instill greater moral awareness in their students and interlocutors[26]. Socrates was famous for questioning his interlocutors relentlessly until they had to admit, to their shame, that they had reached *aporia*[27]. Several of Plato's dialogues hint at

[20] Thomas (2007:352), cf. Ducos (1979:146-9).
[21] Stahl (1968:51). On *verecundia's* greater internalization, cf. Thomas (2007:418).
[22] The 'irrational' aspect of *pudor* however, should be nuanced, given that *pudor* is often conceived as an emotion that can contain outbursts of *furor.*
[23] As Kaster (1997:12) notes, however, prospective uses of *pudor* are rather infrequent. Cf. Thomas (2007:355) and Stahl (1968:51-3), who describes *verecundia* as an *Abwehraffekt*
[24] A comparison with other texts is complicated by the fact that *verecundia* is mostly absent from poetry for metrical reasons, as it does not fit in a hexameter (Thomas 2007:402).
[25] Stahl (1968: 33, 36-7).
[26] The other "emotions of self-assesment", according to Taylor (1985), are pride and guilt. Haidt (2003) similarly categorizes shame, embarrassment and guilt as "self-conscious emotions".
[27] Interestingly, the term for Socrates' method of cross-examation, *elenchus,* is derived from the verb *elenchô,* which has the double meaning of "cross-examine" and "put to shame".

the potential of shame to be a catalyst for moral transformation, even if they simultaneously point out the ways in which the Socratic *elenchus* can go awry[28]. For Aristotle too *aidôs* has a self-transcending potential and can act as a jump-start for moral progress, even if it is not a praiseworthy in itself[29].

Philosophers and rhetoricians of the Hellenistic and Roman period vigorously debated the extent to which shame-appeals should be used in rhetorical persuasion and philosophical conversion. As Stanley Stowers notes, "philosophers and philosophical traditions accepted, modified or rejected the popular beliefs and practices about blame, depending on their views of the human condition and the methods considered necessary for a cure"[30]. The fullest extant discussion of shaming criticism as a therapeutical tool can be found in the Epicurean Philodemus, who devoted his book *On Frank Criticism* (*Peri Parrhèsias*) to the topic. The "biting" (*knisma*) produced by frank criticism, he argues, act as an effective preparation for further philosophical instruction. Philodemus indicates that this "biting" consists of feelings of *aischunè* and *adoxia* and argues that a philosopher bent on fully curing his students "will speak frankly again and again about these things to the one [who is ashamed].[31]

The Platonist Plutarch too argued that shaming criticism should be used in order to bring about a change of heart (*metanoia*). Well-placed words of reproof, he writes, should "burn the soul

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[28] This is particularly clear in the *Gorgias*, in which Socrates successively exposes and shames his interlocutors Gorgias, Polus and Callicles, until each in turn leave the conversation.

[29] Aristotle approvingly notes that "people are being praised for having a sense of shame" and describes shame as an intermediate disposition between the vices of shamelessness and shamefacedness (*EN* II.7, 1108a30-35). Cf. *EN* 1128b20, in which he writes that "no one would praise an older person for being prone to feeling shame, since we think he shouldn't do anything that incurs shame in the first place" (translation by Broadie & Rowe).

[30] Stowers (1988:125).

[31] Fr. 3, 85 (translation Konstan: 1998). Cf. Fr. 71, in which Philodemus notes that a teacher of philosophy surely remembers being "ashamed when he was being instructed (Fr. 71) and Fr. 86 (=90N), in which he argues that individuals who are "neglecting their very shameful conditions" should be "tame[d] into love for themselves". Cf. Armstrong (2007:98), who writes that "[i]f we had a better text, we would find that the emotions of shame (*aischunè*) which the student must be made to feel".

with shame"[32]. As an illustration, he cites the story of how Socrates admonished Alcibiades, "drew an honest tear from his eyes [...] and turned his heart"[33]. In his *On Talkativeness,* he explains that philosophical therapy should consist of two stages, *krisis* (obtaining an understanding of one's condition) and *askesis* (philosophical practices). A person cannot successfully adopt philosophical practices, he argues, unless he first comes to a full understanding of how bad his current condition is: "no one", he writes, "can become habituated to shun or to eradicate from his soul what does not distress him, and we only grow distressed with our ailments when we have perceived, by the exercise of reason, the injuries and shame which result from them"[34].

3. Stoic Shame and The Penitent's Paradox

For Platonists such as Plutarch or Epicureans such as Philodemus, this form of shaming criticism was pedagogically unproblematic, in light of their belief that certain emotions, such as shame about one's vices, or a strong desire for the good, could be morally beneficial[35]. In Book IV of the *Tusculan Disputations,* Cicero notes that the Stoics considered moral distress "a thing to flee like some huge and terrible monster" and explicitly sides with their critics – the Platonists and Aristoteleans –who argued that such feelings have a beneficial function:

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[32] *De Auditu* 46d : ἐπαφῆς δὲ καὶ νουθεσίας πρὸς ἐπανόρθωσιν ἤθους ὥσπερ φαρμάκῳ δάκνοντι λόγῳ χρωμένης ἐλέγχοντι μὴ συνεσταλμένον ἀκούειν μηδ' ἱδρῶτος καὶ ἰλίγγου μεστόν, αἰσχύνῃ φλεγόμενον τὴν ψυχήν, ἀλλ' ἄτρεπτον καὶ σεσηρότα καὶ κατειρωνευόμενον, ἀνελευθέρου τινὸς δεινῶς καὶ ἀπαθοῦς πρὸς τὸ αἰδεῖσθαι νέου διὰ συνήθειαν ἁμαρτημάτων καὶ συνέχειαν, ὥσπερ ἐν σκληρᾷ σαρκὶ καὶ τυλώδει τῇ ψυχῇ μώλωπα μὴ λαμβάνοντος (translation Babbitt, *LCL*).

[33] *Quomodo Adulat.* 69f: οὕτω Σωκράτης Ἀλκιβιάδην ἐκόλουε, καὶ δάκρυον ἐξῆγεν ἀληθινὸν ἐξελεγχομένου καὶ τὴν καρδίαν ἔστρεφε (translation Babbitt, *LCL*). Plutarch's treatment is unsual in that it presents Alciabides' reaction as a conversion. Most other versions of the story stress the failure of Socrates' attempts.

[34] Plut. *De Garrulitate* 510c-d: Οὐδεὶς γὰρ ἐθίζεται φεύγειν καὶ ἀποτρίβεσθαι τῆς ψυχῆς ὃ μὴ δυσχεραίνει· δυσχεραίνομεν δὲ τὰ πάθη, ὅταν τὰς βλάβας καὶ τὰς αἰσχύνας τὰς ἀπ' αὐτῶν τῷ λόγῳ κατανοήσωμεν. On this topic, cf. Ingenkamp (1971: 99-124).

[35] Armstrong (2007:103), citing Philodemus' *On Anger* (Cols XXXVII.20 – XXXVIII.34), points out that the Epicureans recognizes that certain emotions could be pedagogically beneficial; on the necessity of anger, cf. Asmis (2011:152-83).

> Nature ordained it, they say, so that people would be pained at the rebuke or punishment or disgrace meted out to them for their own wrongdoings. For when people bear disgrace and disrepute without sorrow, then their misdeeds seem to go unpunished. It is better to feel the bite of conscience[36].

Plutarch, on the other hand, points out that, in practice, the Stoics did employ such forms of pedagogical shaming and takes them to task for "checking young people with criticism" in a way that "bring[s] about remorse and shame", a therapeutic strategy that appears to be at odds with their view that all ordinary emotions are based on mistaken judgments and should be avoided[37]. As Graver points out, Plutarch does not mention whether his target is a specific set of contemporary Stoics or the Stoics in general[38]. Our sources contain almost no information about the early Stoics' admonitory practices, other than the fact that they had a penchant for frank criticism[39]. Still, there is no evidence that they deliberately shamed their students, as their Cynic colleagues did[40]. Like most ancient thinkers, the early Stoics viewed remorse (*metameleia, paenitentia*) not so much as a sign of moral self-awareness but as an undesirable trait, as it indicated previous wrongdoing[41]. They categorized remorse as a form of distress and described it as "an unhappy emotion and

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[36] *Tusc.* 4.45: *Ipsam aegritudinem, quam nos ut taetram et inmanem beluam fugiendam diximus, non sine magna utilitate a natura dicunt constitutam, ut homines castigationibus reprehensionibus ignominiis adfici se in delicto dolerent* (translation Graver: 2002)

[37] *De Virt. Moral.* 452c-d (translation Graver 2007:334): Αὐτούς γε μὴν τούτους ὁρᾶν ἔστι πολλάκις μὲν ἐπαίνοις τοὺς νέους παρορμῶντας πολλάκις δὲ νουθεσίαις κολάζοντας, ὧν τῷ μὲν ἔπεται τὸ ἥδεσθαι τῷ δὲ τὸ λυπεῖσθαι. Καὶ γὰρ ἡ νουθεσία καὶ ὁ ψόγος ἐμποιεῖ μετάνοιαν καὶ αἰσχύνην, ὧν τὸ μὲν λύπη τῷ γένει τὸ δὲ φόβος ἐστί. Cf. Graver (2007:207).

[38] Graver (2007:207).

[39] Notwithstanding his rejection of the Cynics' radical antinomianism, Zeno does seem to have shared his Cynic teacher's *parrhesia*, as several witty anecdotes in Diogenes Laertius attest (Diog. Laert. VII.17-27). Cleanthes too recommended that a teacher should employ frank speech with discretion as well as firmness, and wasn't afraid to be harsh with lazy students (*SVF* I. 597-619, Philodemus, *Stoicorum Historia* Cols. XXII – XIV, Cols. Va and Vb Olivieri).

[40] Diogenes Laertius (VII.3) relates that Crates gave Zeno of Citium the humiliating assignment of carrying a pot of lentil-soup through the Kerameikos in order to cure him of his shamefacedness. On Seneca's disapproval of the Cynics unrestrained *parrhesia,* cf. *infra,* p. 97.

[41] Cf. Fulkerson (2013: 1-27 esp. 5-12), who argues that the main reason for the low valuation of regret in antiquity is the concern with reputation and honor, which made high-status unwilling to openly admit their mistakes and express regret. Cf. Kaster (2005:82), who argues that occasions that, for us, would occasion remorse, "tended to appear in the guise of shame" in Roman texts.

productive of conflict", brought about by an awareness of one's responsibility for moral missteps[42]. Since there is no *eupatheia* corresponding to distress, it follows that the Stoic sage will never feel remorse about his present condition[43].

Somewhat surprisingly, perhaps, the early Stoics *did* believe that sages could feel *aidôs*, a *eupatheia* which corresponds to the ordinary person's *aischunè*, and which they defined as a fear of justified criticism[44]. On the other hand, they believed that ordinary persons, including Stoic *proficientes*, could only feel *aischunè*, the fear of dishonor. This stark bifurcation between *aidôs* and *aischunè* amounted to a denial that a non-sage could ever feel what we might call "moral shame", a sincere distress about one's moral faults. This led to the counter-intuitive conclusion that even Stoic *proficientes* always feel ashamed for the wrong reasons until the very moment they reach perfect wisdom.

As Rachana Kamtekar has pointed out, this implication seems to render *aidôs* "intellectually and motivationally redundant"[45]. For Stoic sages, thoughts about justified criticism would be unnecessary, given that their actions are already morally perfect in all circumstances[46]. On the other hand, non-philosophers and or *proficientes*, who could actually benefit from a fear of justified criticism, cannot be said to feel *aidôs*. Stephen White, who has aptly called this counter-intuitive implication "the penitent's paradox", has argued that it was first formulated by Arcesilaus or his fellow Academics as an objection to the emotion theory of Zeno and Cleanthes[47]. In his

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42 *SVF* III.414, 563 (translation Graver 2007:193)

43 As Stobaeus notes (*Ecl.* II 111,18 W = SVF III.548), the Stoic sage "never repents", since this would entail that he initially assented to a wrong proposition.

44 *SVF* III.407-9, 416, 432.

45 Kamtekar (1998:139-43).

46 Cf. Sorabji (2009:156), who argues that "the good kind of shame in a wise person would not be preceded by much feeling at all, since the prospect of misconduct is so remote"

47 White (1995:244-45). As Gisela Striker suggests, the question whether distress over one's own moral errors could be justified and could lead to moral progress, is arguably "the most powerful objection raised against the Stoics by their contemporary critics" (2008: 373). There are indications that Chrysippus tried to soften the edges of this radical view. In a recently published essay, Brunt (2013;10-28, originally presented in 1991) discusses the Stoic claim reported by Galen, (*PHP* III, p.124.3) that fools act badly in all circumstances and points to Chrysippean

Tusculan Disputations, Cicero illustrates the paradox by recounting the story of Alcibiades, who was chastised by Socrates for his erratic lifestyle:

> [W]e are told that Socrates once persuaded Alcibiades that he was unworthy to be called human, and was no better than a manual laborer despite his noble birth. Alcibiades then became very upset, begging Socrates with tears to take away his shameful character and give him a virtuous one. What are we to say about this, Cleanthes? Surely you would not claim that the circumstance that occasioned Alcibiades' distress was not really a bad thing[48].

Cicero's point is that Alcibiades was genuinely concerned about his moral failures, rather than about a loss of reputation, and that it would be absurd to tell him that he was wrong to be so concerned about his moral character. Cicero offers a solution to this paradox, based on Chrysippus' analysis of the emotions, by arguing that Alcibiades was right to think that his moral failures are bad, but wrong to assent to the proposition that it was appropriate to respond to this realization by feeling ashamed or distressed[49]. On White's view, Chrysippus introduced this new analysis of the emotions as consisting of two judgments (the correctness of a belief that a good or evil is present *and* the appropriateness of reacting to it in a certain way) as a way of responding to the Academic objections against Zeno's and Cleanthes' views that an emotion followed upon a single judgment about the correctness of a belief that a good or evil is present. On this view, Alciabiades was correct to assent to the belief that a real evil was present (since he was failing to live a virtuous life) but wrong to assent to the belief that shame was an appropriate reaction to this realization. Rather than

testimonia nuancing this claim.

[48] Cic. *Tusc.* III.77: *Quid enim dicemus, cum Socrates Alcibiadi persuasisset, ut accepimus, eum nihil hominis esse nec quicquam inter Alcibiadem summo loco natum et quemvis baiolum interesse, cum se Alcibiades adflictaret lacrimansque Socrati supplex esset, ut sibi virtutem traderet turpitudinemque depelleret, – quid dicemus, Cleanthe? Tum in illa re, quae aegritudine Alcibiadem adficiebat, mali nihil fuisse?* (translation Graver: 2002)

[49] Cic. *Tusc.* III.73 (*SVF* III.486): *Chrysippus autem caput esse censet in consolando, detrahere illam opinionem maerenti, si se officio fungi putet iusto atque debito*. Graver (2007:317) notes that "although Cicero does not claim to have taken the Alcibiades example directly from Chrysippus, we should allow for the possibility that he did so and that Chrysippus himself envisioned the applicability of his consolatory method to remorse as well as ordinary grief". A testimony in Origen supports the suggestions that Chrysippus recommended this method for other emotions as well (*SVF* III.474, discussed on p.38).

feeling ashamed about his missteps, he should simply work on avoiding them in the future. Following Chrysippus, Cicero suggests that a philosopher should attack the inappropriateness of his interlocutor's emotions, even according to his own beliefs, rather than attack the mistaken judgment that actually triggered the emotion:

> The more reliable cure […] is when you teach that the emotions are wrong in and of themselves and have nothing either natural or necessary about them. We chide the mourner for being weak and womanish in spirit, and we praise those serious and consistent persons who endure without turmoil the events of human life. We see that when we do this, distress itself is relieved, even in those who decide that such events are bad but that one should bear them calmly[50].

Though Cicero's approach avoids the absurd conclusion that Alcibiades was wrong *in principle* to feel ashamed about his moral failures, his solution still entails that it was wrong for him to feel ashamed *in practice.* As Margaret Graver has pointed out, however, the argument that it was wrong for Alcibiades to feel ashamed regardless of the correctness of his value judgment is inconsistent with the Stoic analysis of the emotions[51]. First of all, the argument that moral distress or elation are bad in and of themselves is inconsistent with the Stoic belief that sages could feel *eupatheiai,* which accompany correct beliefs concerning the appropriateness of a certain expansion or retraction of the soul[52]. If Chrysippus argues that it is wrong to feel any emotion, even when a genuinely good or harmful situation occurs, this would imply that even the *eupatheiai* of Stoic sages would be wrong. If his argument is merely that it is always wrong to feel *distress*, he seems

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[50] Cic. *Tusc.* IV.60*: Haec est certa et propria sanatio, si doceas ipsas perturbationes per se esse vitiosas nec habere quicquam aut naturale aut necessarium, ut ipsam aegritudinem leniri videmus, cum obicimus maerentibus imbecillitatem animi ecfeminati, cumque eorum gravitatem constantiamque laudamus, qui non turbulente humana patiantur* (translation Graver:2002).

[51] Graver (2002:202-206). Bonhöffer (1890:302) has similarly pointed out that is contradictory, within the Stoic theory of the emotions, to say that the recognition of a real present evil would not elicit distress. Sorabji (2009:160), on the other hand, defends Cicero's conclusion that, it was wrong for Alcibiades to be distress, arguing that "his reason for judging his violent feelings of contraction is appropriate was not the right one – that they would be paedagogically productive. He thought the nasty feelings appropriate to the nasty recognition of his faults. But what he should have thought appropriate to that recognition was reform – pulling his socks up."

[52] *Tusc.* IV.12-3, cf. Graver (2002:172).

to be on stronger ground, as the Stoics argued that there is no *eupatheia* corresponding to distress. But even then, the fact that *sages* would never think it right to be distressed does not entail that *non-sages* never would[53]. Secondly, a total condemnation of all feelings of the ordinary person is at odds with the Stoic's teleological worldview, which implies that universal behavioral capacities, including the capacity to feel ashamed, would be useful in some way or another[54].

In what follows, I will show that Seneca avoids both pitfalls by arguing that all human beings are born with a capacity to feel ashamed about the inconsistency or harmfulness of their beliefs and actions. Before closely examining Seneca's arguments, however, I would like to put his contribution in context by briefly discussing how other Stoics – both predecessors and contemporaries – addressed the problematic status of *aidôs* in Stoic theory and by highlighting scholarly disagreements on this topic. In a recently published essay, Peter Brunt suggests that "the approval of *aidôs*", which is clearly attested in later Stoics such as Epictetus – and, I would add, Seneca – may in fact "begin with the middle Stoa, particularly Panaetius[55]. However, since nearly everything we know about Panaetius is derived from Cicero's *De Officiis,* few things can be said with certainty about Panaetius' conception of *aidôs*[56]. The problem is especially acuate as it is unclear whether Cicero's *verecundia* is meant as a Latin equivalent of the Greek *aidôs*[57]. All we

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53 As Graver points out, Stoic sages never feel distress, not in light of judgment (2) that it is wrong to do so, but because they never even reach judgment (1) that they are in a bad situation (since they correctly judge that only moral evil, from which they are already immune, is bad). But the fact that sages never reach a point where they might feel distress does not entail that they would think it wrong to be distressed if a real evil *were to be* present. In other words, it is simply because they possess *aidemosunè,* "the knowledge of how to watch out for justified reproof" that they never actually need to feel *aidôs*

54 Graver (2007:202-3).

55 Brunt (2013:120).

56 The extent to which Cicero's *De Officiis* is based on Panaetius is a matter of scholarly disagreement. Until the 1990's, the consensus view was that Cicero largely paraphrased Panaetius, without adding much of his own except Roman *exempla*. For an eloquent and detailed exposition of this view, cf. Brunt (1998/2013:180-243). Important recent studies (Dyck 1996, Lefèvre 2001), however, have highlighted Cicero's own contribution.

57 Labowsky (1934:65) argues that *verecundia* is Cicero's translation of Panaetius' *aidemosunè,* "the knowledge of how to watch out for justified reproof". Alesse (1997:206) identifies Cicero's *verecundia* as a rendering of Panaetius' *aidôs*. Kamtekar (1998:148n41) suggests that *verecundia* "would seem to translate either *aidôs* or *aidemosunè*."

can confidently say is that Cicero establishes an explicit connection between the Panaetian notion of seemliness and the Latin conception of *verecundia*, which he describes as an inborn moral sensibility that picks up signals of justified approval or disapproval of our actions[58]. Cicero, however, does not explicitly connect this notion of an inborn *verecundia* with admonitory practices designed to elicit it in the way Seneca does[59].

Apart from Seneca himself, the first Stoic writer who explicitly discusses forms of admonition involving shame is his younger contemporary Musonius Rufus (ca. 30-62 CE). Musonius states that philosophy "trains one to have a sense of shame" and even argues that children should be taught what is right and wrong and be "inspired with a feeling of shame toward all that is base[60]. Musonius's argument has the important implication that *aidôs*, described as an aversion from moral baseness, is not restricted to Stoic sages, but that even children can be trained to feel it. The cultivation of *aidôs,* however, is not just a form of emotional habituation restricted to early education, but is an essential component of a Stoic *proficiens*' moral development. As Aulus Gellius reports, Musonius believed that a philosopher's admonitory speech should instill feelings of "silent shame" in his students[61]:

> Whoever the hearer is, unless he is a completely lost cause, must necessarily shudder and feel silent shame and repentance or rejoice and wonder during a philosopher's speech and even show changes of expression and betray varying emotions, to the degree that the philosopher's treatment has affected him and his consciousness of the different tendencies of his mind, whether sound or corrupt[62].

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[58] As Walter Nicgorski (1984:562) has argued, *verecundia* is not just the basis for *temperantia / sophrosunè* but a natural moral sensibility that is "the basis of morality and right itself", representing our natural moral inclinations from which reason fashions a moral framework. The theory of seemliness (*to prepon*) unquestionably goes back to Panaetius, but, *pace* Dyck (1996:240-1), it cannot be said with certainty whether Panaetius already connected it with *verecundia,* for reasons discussed in the previous note.

[59] *Off* I.136 discusses the need for *obiurgatio* and *castigatio* but does not mention that such admonitory strategies appeal to *pudor* or *verecundia.*

[60] *Diatribe* IV, p. 62 Lutz, line 18: ἐθίζει δ' αἰδῶ ἔχειν (the subject is philosophy); *Diatribe* III, p. 48 Lutz lines 3-4: εἶτα δὲ ἐμποιητέον αἰδῶ πρὸς ἅπαν αἰσχρόν.

[61] At the beginning of the quotation (Gellius, *Noctes Atticae* V.1.3), Musonius defines the *oratio* of the philosopher as comprised of various forms of admonition, including *hortatio, monitio, suasio* and *obiurgatio,* which are often found in Seneca's works as well (cf. *supra* p.27).

[62] Gellius, *Noctes Atticae* V.1.3-4 (= Musonius Fragment 49): *Quisquis ille est, qui audit, nisi ille est plane deperditus,*

Musonius' argument that any hearer who is not "wholly lost" will feel ashamed after being reprehended is similar not just to Plutarch's claims but also to Seneca's argument that all individuals who still possess their inborn moral inclinations will respond to shaming criticism, even when they are taken in by misguided beliefs[63]. Musonius proceeds by arguing that this shows the "existence of an innate inclination of the human soul towards goodness and nobleness, and of the presence of the seeds of virtue in each of us"[64]. This claim too is reminiscent of Seneca who, as we have seen, connects the capacity to feel ashamed after being castigated with our inborn inclination towards the good[65]

The paucity of our sources does not allow us to say with certainty whether Musonius' conception of an inborn and beneficial capacity to feel *aidôs* was influenced by Seneca, derived from similar sources, or developed independently[66]. What we do know is that Musonius' pupil Epictetus (55-135 CE) often resorted to shaming criticism and elaborated a notion of *aidôs* that is very similar to what we find in Musonius and Seneca. As Rachana Kamtekar has pointed out, Epictetus too often shames his students by "remind[ing] them of who they are potentially and what they are capable of, drawing their attention to the disparity between their potential and what they are actually like"[67]. This gap, she argues, creates "a polarized sense of self-worth and the difference

inter ipsam philosophi orationem et perhorrescat necesse est et pudeat tacitus et paeniteat et gaudeat et admiretur, varios adeo vultus disparque sensus gerat, proinde ut eum conscientiamque eius adfecerit utrarumque animi partium aut sincerarum aut aegrarum philosophi pertractatio (translation Rolfe, *LCL,* adapted).

[63] Cf. Plut. *De Auditu* 46d: "To hear a reprehension or admonition to reform character, delivered in words that penetrate like a biting drug, and not […] burn with shame in the soul […] is a notable sign of an illiberal nature in the young, dead to all modesty" (translation Babbitt, *LCL*). Cf. *infra,* p. 82.

[64] Diatribe II, ed. Lutz p. 38.12-14 (translation p. 39): τοῦτ' οὖν τίνος ἄλλου τεκμήριόν ἐστιν ἢ τοῦ φυσικὴν εἶναι ὑποβολὴν τῇ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ψυχῇ πρὸς καλοκἀγαθίαν καὶ σπέρμα ἀρετῆς ἑκάστῳ ἡμῶν ἐνεῖναι;

[65] Musonius' term σπέρμα ἀρετῆς is the exact equivalent of Seneca's expression *semina virtutum,* both of which refer to the Stoic notion of the *aphormai* or starting-points of the virtues.

[66] Given the fact that Seneca was Musonius' senior by 34 years, it is highly unlikely that Musonius would have directly influenced him.

[67] Kamtekar (1998:150).

between the two poles is supposed to goad us into self-improvement"[68]. Epictetus, in fact, famously warned his students that "the lecture-room of the philosopher is a hospital; you shouldn't walk out of it in pleasure, but in pain"[69]. He repeatedly states that all human beings possess a natural inborn *aidôs,* which he defines as a quality of self-respect that prevents us from acting against our moral character (*prohairesis*)[70].

For Epictetus, as for Musonius, *aidôs* is not an *eupatheia* possessed only by sages, as it was for the early Stoics, but a birthright of every human being. He further argued, in a way that is reminiscent of both Musonius and Seneca, that a person can only be helped by philosophy as long as this *aidôs* is intact[71]. Scholars such as Bonhoffer and Sorabji claim that Epictetus' habit of appealing to his students' *aidôs* is fundamentally at odds with the Stoic theory of the emotions and that his *Discourses* do not offer a satisfactory theoretical explanation for his approach[72]. Rachana Kamtekar, on the other hand, has argued that Epictetus' works contain an implicit justification of his approach. Her reconstruction of Epictetus' thought, however, has met with skepticism on account of the fact that it downplays the fact that the *Discourses* present *aidôs* as a full-blown emotional reaction and not merely as a "judgment of appropriateness"[73]. In addition, Kamtekar

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[68] Kamtekar (1998:154). Epictetus, however, rarely appeals to his audience's conventional, non-philosophical values in the way Seneca does. Instead, he typically exhorts them to live up to their God-given potential to employ their rational minds. This difference can be attributed to the fact that addresses a group of young men who voluntarily study Stoic philosophy with him, whereas Seneca writes to family members, friends and political relations, to whom he reaches out of his own accord and who generally don't identify as Stoics

[69] *Discourses* III.23.30: ἰατρεῖόν ἐστιν, ἄνδρες, τὸ τοῦ φιλοσόφου σχολεῖον· οὐ δεῖ ἡσθέντας ἐξελθεῖν, ἀλλ' ἀλγήσαντας.

[70] *E*.g. *Discourses* II.4.2, II.10.22

[71] *Discourses* I.5.3, 8-9; II.8.23; II.10.15-22, 29; II.22.20; III.3.9; III.7.27; III.17.3; IV.1.162; IV.2.8; IV.3.3, 7-9; V.4.7; IV.5.21-2; IV.8.33; IV.9.6, 9, 12, 17; IV.13.13; for a discussion, cf. Kamtekar (1998:144-147).

[72] Even though Epictetus never explicitly explains how his notion of *aidôs* might fit in with the Stoic categorization of the emotions, Kamtekar argues that his psychological account of habituation contains an implicit justification of this approach: *"*Epictetus recommends that we accustom ourselves to performing the actions that correspond to whatever character trait we wish to have […] Epictetus may reasonably call an act *aidemon* when it makes a person more *aidemon* and not only when it flows from a stable *aidemon* character; he may say a person has or displays *aidôs* not only when she has the virtue, but also when her judgments are of the type the strengthen her *aidôs,* or bring about *aidemon* acts and an *aidemon* character" (Kamtekar 1998:146).

[73] Graver argues that Kamtekar's interpretation of Epictetan *aidôs* as merely a "self-evaluative judgment of appropriateness" obscures the fact it Epictetus describes it as a "real affective response […] manifested in blushing

does not discuss the fact that the revaluation of *aidôs* did not start with Epictetus, but was anticipated by Musonius Rufus and Seneca.

Regardless of whether this revaluation started with Seneca, or whether he and Musonius relied on earlier sources, Seneca's account offers the earliest known and fullest explanation for how shame-appeals can be justified from a Stoic point of view, by connecting our capacity to feel ashamed with our inborn moral inclinations. Even as he joins the early Stoics in condemning a misguided concern with honor, Seneca argues that all but the most corrupted people maintain the capacity to feel ashamed about their vices. Stoic *proficientes*, he argues, should develop this capacity by confessing their faults to a philosophical friend and by accepting, even actively inviting moral criticism. The capacity to feel ashamed, however, can benefit even non-philosophers or lapsed *proficientes*. As Seneca repeatedly points out, even the most hardened wrongdoers can be set straight by means of shaming criticism, which activates their capacity to recognize the harmfulness of their behavior.

4. Seneca on Shame and Society

Notwithstanding his endorsement of shaming criticism as an admonitory strategy, Seneca draws a sharp distinction between the shame that stems from a realization of a moral violation and the shame that is only concerned with social prestige[74]. While the former may support moral progress, the latter positively hinders it. Seneca even blames himself for occasionally giving in to a false

as well as aversion". Graver herself does not attempt to answer the question whether Epictetus' appeals to the emotions are, or can be, justified, or the question whether the "real psychological event" or "affective response" involved is a full-blown emotion (*pathos*) or something different.

[74] Seneca distinguishes between *gloria*, which depends upon the judgment of the many, and *claritas*, which depends only on the judgment of good men, and argues that only the latter matter; on Seneca's redefinition of the notion of *gloria*, cf. Newman (1988/2008).

sense of shame about his philosophical lifestyle. In *Letter* 87, he reports an amusing – be it almost certainly fictionalized – incident[75]: together with his friend Maximus, he went on a short trip around Campania, traveling on a mule cart. Though he enjoyed himself, Seneca reports that he cannot help but worry about being seen while traveling in such modest circumstances:

> I can hardly bring myself to wish that others should think this cart is mine. My false sense of shame about what's right still persists, you see; and whenever we meet a more sumptuous party I blush in spite of myself - proof that this conduct that I approve and praise has not yet gained a firm and steadfast dwelling-place within me. He who blushes at riding in a ramshackle vehicle will boast when he rides in a fancy one. So I haven't made enough progress yet: I do not yet have the courage to openly acknowledge my thriftiness, and even now I worry about what other travelers think of me[76].

The fundamental problem with relying on the approval or disapproval of one's social peers, he argues, is that it leads to complacency and self-deception, and a tendency to act merely to obtain the approval of others, rather than to do what is right. As he puts it in *Letter* 59:

> This in particular hinders us, that we are too readily satisfied with ourselves; if we run into someone who calls us good men, or sensible men, or venerable men, we recognize ourselves in his description. We are not satisfied with moderate praise and we accept whatever shameless flattery heaps upon us as if it were our due. We agree with those who declare us to be the best and wisest of men, even as we know that they are prone to lying much and often. We are so self-complacent that we want to be praised for the things of which we do the opposites as much as we can [...] As a result, it follows that we are unwilling to be changed, because we believe ourselves to be the best of men[77].

This self-complacency, Seneca warns, leads to an aversion of moral criticism, rather than an aversion of shameful behavior. In the *De Tranquillitate Animi*, he describes in detail how the effort

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[75] On the fictionalization of autobiographical teachable moments in Seneca's *Letters,* cf. Watson (2008).

[76] *Ep.* 87.4: *Vix a me obtineo ut hoc vehiculum velim videri meum: durat adhuc perversa recti verecundia, et quotiens in aliquem comitatum lautiorem incidimus invitus erubesco, quod argumentum est ista quae probo, quae laudo, nondum habere certam sedem et immobilem. Qui sordido vehiculo erubescit pretioso gloriabitur. Parum adhuc profeci: nondum audeo frugalitatem palam ferre; etiamnunc curo opiniones viatorum.*

[77] *Ep.* 59.9-11: [*Q*]*uid ita nos stultitia tam pertinaciter teneat?* [...] *Illud praecipue inpedit, quod cito nobis placemus; si invenimus qui nos bonos viros dicat, qui prudentes, qui sanctos, adgnoscimus. Non sumus modica laudatione contenti: quidquid in nos adulatio sine pudore congessit tamquam debitum prendimus. Optimos nos esse, sapientissimos adfirmantibus adsentimur, cum sciamus illos saepe multa mentiri; adeoque indulgemus nobis ut laudari velimus in id cui contraria cum maxime facimus... sequitur itaque ut ideo mutari nolimus quia nos optimos esse credidimus.*

to cultivate a polished public persona can bring about endless anxiety about potential *faux pas*[78]. This concern with self-presentation prevents people from facing the truth about themselves: the very unpleasantness of "recall[ing] something they must view with regret", he argues, will cause people to refrain from "direct[ing] their thoughts back to ill-spent hours"[79]. The result of this refusal to confront one's own mistakes it that people will do everything to *appear* good, rather than to *be* good, and studiously avoid both being criticized and criticizing others, for fear of retaliation.

As Robert Kaster has argued, the constant competition for honor within Roman aristocratic society explains why *pudor* appears in Latin sources as a mostly ineffective source of moral motivation. Shaming criticism, he argues, was a rhetorical weapon that entailed a risk of "mutually assured destruction": by attacking another person's honor, a Roman aristocrat made himself vulnerable to immediate, and potentially career-wrecking retaliation. This risk, Kaster argues, led to a "gentleman's agreement [that] tended to produce a certain tolerance for ethical failure"[80]. Seneca displays a keen awareness of the moral and psychological repercussions of this social compact, in particular how it leads to complacency, self-deception and a general unwillingness to accept moral counsel. He aims to counter this tendency by encouraging Lucilius and his other addressees to remain deaf to "the siren songs of the mob" and to let their self-evaluation depend not on his wealth, honor or reputation, but only on their own introspection and self-judgment[81].

5. The Importance of Openness to Criticism

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78 *Tranq.* XVII.1-2

79 *Brev. Vit. X*.3: *Hoc amittunt occupati; nec enim illis vacat praeterita respicere, et si vacet iniucunda est paenitendae rei recordatio. Inviti itaque ad tempora male exacta animum revocant nec audent ea retemptare quorum vitia, etiam quae aliquo praesentis voluptatis lenocinio surripiebantur, retractando patescunt.*

80 Kaster (1996:14)

81 *Ep*. 31.1-3, 80.10, 116.2-3.

Seneca's insistent and repeated emphasis on the need to withdraw from society and disregard public opinion has led scholars such as Cedric Littlewood to talk about his "rhetoric of self-sufficiency" and his "isolationist brand of Stoicism which urges disengagement and withdrawal from an irredeemably corrupt world"[82]. But to call Seneca's Stoicism "isolationist" is to neglect his equally strong emphasis on the need to find philosophically minded friends, with whom we can be honest and open, offering and receiving moral criticism in a friendly spirit. This simultaneously centrifugal and centripetal movement of the *Letters*, is clearly illustrated in *Letter* 7, in which the recommendation to "withdraw into yourself as far as you can" is immediately followed by the injunction to "associate with those who will make a better man of you"[83]. Throughout his philosophical works, in fact, Seneca aims to counter his addressees' self-deception and misguided self-statisfaction by exhorting them to question themselves and to be open to moral criticism. This openness, he argues, entails a willingness to feel genuinely ashamed about their moral faults[84].

In the *De Ira,* in particular, Seneca frequently reminds his readers to meet moral criticism with appreciation rather than with anger. "Reproof should be accepted as therapy", he writes, like surgery and fasting and other things that cause pain in order to do us good[85]. It is foolish, he continues, to insist on our blamelessness and to be indignant when we are admonished or chastised,

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[82] Littlewood (2004:8)

[83] *Ep.* 7.8: *Recede in te ipse quantum potes; cum his versare qui te meliorem facturi sunt, illos admitte quos tu potes facere meliores.* Cf. Schönegg (1999:36) and Habinek (1990:184), who convincingly show how Seneca appropriates the ideal of philosophical friendship formulated in Cicero's Laelius.

[84] Thomas Habinek argues that Seneca's advice to call upon a friend to "resist, rather than to anticipate, the *existimatio* of society at large" is an "inversion of a traditional institution [...] facilitated by the Ciceronian expansion of *amicitia* to include remonstrance between friends and the insistence on mutual adherence to an abstract standard of virtue" (1990:184). On Seneca's reconfiguration of Roman friendship, cf. further Wilcox (2012:115-131).

[85] *De Ira* II.27.3: *castigatio sic accipienda est quomodo scalpellum et abstinentia et alia quae profutura torquent.*

for in doing so "we are doing wrong by adding arrogance and defiance to our misdeeds[86]. With this in mind, Seneca urges Novatus, and his readers, to "pay heed to those who rebuke us"[87]. In book III, he cites Socrates as an *exemplum* of a man who granted his friends the *ius obiurgandi* and argues that "a good man accepts reproof gladly; the worse a man is the more bitterly he resents it"[88].

In the *De Tranquillitate Animi*, Seneca similarly argues that confessing one's moral transgressions to a trusted friend can even be positively joyful[89]. Serenus, Seneca's interlocutor in this work, represents the model *proficiens* who voluntarily confesses his weaknesses and positively invites moral criticism[90]. If anything, Serenus errs on the side of being overly critical of himself[91]. Uniquely among Seneca's *Dialogues*, the text opens with a report in which Serenus describes his restless condition and asks Seneca for help to attain greater tranquility. As Margaret Graver notes, Serenus' 'confession' displays a combination of remorse and moral shame, arising from a "horror at [his] possibilities as a moral agent" and his recognition of his faults as "them indications of an unstable character"[92].

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[86] *De Ira* II.28.1: *Indignamur aliqua admonitione aut coercitione nos castigatos, cum illo ipso tempore peccemus, quod adicimus malefactis adrogantiam et contumaciam.*

[87] *De Ir*a II.28.4: *Hoc cogitantes aequiores simus delinquentibus, credamus obiurgantibus.* Cf. further *Ben.* V.25.4, in which Seneca writes that the willingness to take advice is "the second best form of virtue" and *Ep.* 108.13-14, in which he tells us, that, as a young man, he himself positively rejoiced in being castigated by his teacher Attalus (cf. *infra,* pp. 150).

[88] *De Ira* III.13.3-4; III. 36.4: *admoneri bonus gaudet, pessimus quisque rectorem asperrime patitur*

[89] Seneca's emphasis on the need to be open about one's states of mind with friends and philosophical companions may be related with his emphasis on the impossibility of judging moral behavior by merely observing external actions (Roller 2001:78). In order to pass moral judgment on another, Seneca insists, we must look at internal deliberation rather than external action. *Tranq.* VII.3-6

[90] Motto and Clark (1993) argue that, although "that Serenus stands out in the pages of Seneca's prose writings as the most memorable and picturesque character" (142), he is, in fact, "merely a thin screen, an *alter ego* and a disguise for the Philosopher himself" (149)

[91] Seneca points out the he needs "confidence in yourself (*fidem tibi*) and the belief that you are on the right path" (II.2). Still he argues that Serenus should "understand how much less trouble you have with your self-depreciation (*fastidio tui*) than those who, fettered to some showy declaration and struggling beneath the burden of some grand title, are held more by shame than by desire (*pudor magis quam voluntas*) to the pretence they are making" (II.5)

[92] Graver (2007:208-9)

Serenus' self-diagnosis, in which he reports the results of his self-examination suggests that he is a thoughtful aspiring philosopher. He is not afraid to admit to Seneca that his progress so far has been modest, "for why should I not admit the truth to you as to a physician"[93]. Serenus, in fact, frames their epistolary interaction in the form of a medical consultation: "I will tell you the kind of things that happen to me – you will find a name for my condition"[94]. He concludes his letter with a meditation on the power of flattery and self-deception, which eloquently restates Seneca's own views on this subject[95]:

> [W]e take a favorable view of our own affairs and bias always hampers our judgment. I think that many people would have arrived at wisdom if they had not been convinced that they had already arrived, if they had not pretend to have certain characteristics and passed by others with their eyes shut. For there is no reason to think that we are more likely to be ruined by flattering others than by flattering ourselves. mWho dares to speak the truth to himself? Who, even if he is surrounded by a throng of applauding sycophants, is not still his own greatest flatterer?[96]

Seneca's ideal of a philosophical friendship based on openness and respect, modeled in his interaction with Serenus, represents an attempt to establish a social setting in which the concern with honor can be put to rest and in which two social equals can sincerely confess their moral faults and offer mutual moral criticism without the risk of unpleasant social repercussions.

6. Shaming Criticism as a Last Resort

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93 *Tranq.* I.2: *quare enim non verum ut medico fatear?*

94 *Tranq.* I.4*: dicam quae accident mihi, tu morbo nomen invenies.*

95 Cf. *Ep.* 59, quoted *supra*, pp. 70-71. Seneca repeatedly decries flattery and self-deception in his writings. Cf. e.g. *Ep.* 50.4, 53.6-8, *Ira 2.21.7-9, Brev. 15.2, Nat. Q.* IV praef 3, *Ben* V.7.4

96 *Tranq.* I.15-16: *Familiariter enim domestica aspicimus et semper iudicio favor officit. Puto multos potuisse ad sapientiam pervenire, nisi putassent se pervenisse, nisi quaedam in se dissimulassent, quaedam opertis oculis transiluissent. Non est enim quod magis aliena <nos> iudices adulatione perire quam nostra. Quis sibi verum dicere ausus est? Quis non inter laudantium blandientiumque positus greges plurimum tamen sibi ipse adsentatus est?*

Still, Seneca was very conscious of the fact that this situation represented an ideal that was rarely achieved in reality. If Serenus represents the model Stoic *proficiens* who spontaneously admits his mistakes, Marcellinus, the friend Seneca discusses in *Letter* 29, represents the other extreme, the stubborn interlocutor who vehemently resists philosophical admonition and is avoiding Seneca's company "for fear of hearing the truth about himself"[97]. He can still be saved, but "a helping hand needs to be offered soon", since "the great strength of his character is already inclining to wickedness"[98]. Seneca does not explicitly tell us what Marcellinus' fault is, but his remarks to Lucilius imply that they stem from his attachment to status and reputation[99]. Given the urgency of Marcellinus' situation, Seneca has determined to pay him a visit, put up with his taunts and "show him his faults"[100]. By doing so, he he hopes to "stir him to tears" and restrain his vices, even if only temporarily[101].

In other passages, Seneca similarly argues that the best approach with individuals such as Marcellinus is to vividly show them their faults in order to bring them to the painful realization that their behavior is shameful. The reason for this, he points out, is that "more people abstain from

[97] *Ep.* 29.1: *Raro ad nos venit, non ulla alia ex causa quam quod audire verum timet.* Marcellinus' presentation as a cautionary *exemplum* is pointedly emphasized by the way it is announced in the previous letter and mirrored in the next one. Seneca ends *Ep.* 28 with a discussion of Epicurus' saying that "awareness of wrongdoing is the beginning of salvation". To bring about such self-awareness, he suggests that should "hunt up charges against [him]self" and "be harsh with [him]self". Marcellinus' lack of self-criticism, and his unwillingness to be corrected, stands in marked contrast with this recommendation. Equally conspicuous is the contrast between Marcellinus' unwillingness to listen to Seneca's counsel, and the *exemplum* of Aufidius Bassus in *Ep.* 30, who gratefully accepts the counsel of a Stoic philosopher on his deathbed.

[98] *Ep.* 29.4*: magna in illo ingeni vis est, sed iam tendentis in pravum*. In §1-2, however, Seneca wites that he will not approach Marcellinus right now, and elaborates on the fact that "one must not talk to a man unless he is willing to listen". With this point of view, Seneca positions himself against Diogenes and other Cynics "who employed an undiscriminating freedom of speech and offered advice to any who came in their way".

[99] In *Ep.* 29.8, he writes that Marcellinus' worth "was greater when many thought it less" and in his final recommendations to Lucilius, in which Seneca appllies the lesson drawn from Marcellinus' situation to Lucilius;, he exhorts him to "stand firm in the face of things which have terrified you and not to "count the number of those who inspire fear in you"

[100] *Ep.* 29.5: *mala sua ostendere.*

[101] *Ep.* 29.7: *fortasse illi lacrimas movebo* […] §8: *Vitia eius etiam si non excidero, inhibebo; non desinent, sed intermittent; fortasse autem et desinent, si intermittendi consuetudinem fecerint.*

wrong actions because they are ashamed of wrongdoing than because they desire the good"[102]. In *Letter* 25, for example, he tells Lucilius about an unnamed mutual friend, who has so far resisted his counsel. This friend's moral faults, Seneca argues, need to be utterly crushed *(frangenda*), a term referring to severe shaming criticism[103]. "I will take every liberty", he writes "for I do not love him if I am unwilling to hurt his feelings"[104].

In *Letters* 94 and 95, Seneca repeatedly stresses the usefulness of severe types of moral criticism, such as reproof (*castigatio*), accusation (*denuntiatio*) and reproach (*obiurgatio*), and specifically points out that reproof works by "imposing shame"[105]. In *De Ira*, he similarly argues that appeals to a person's *pudor* can sometimes be therapeutically useful, when all other methods have failed. In book III, he includes shame-appeals in two different lists of remedies for anger:

> Our approach must be determined by the character of each individual, for entreaties convince some, while others attack and pursue the downcast. Some people are appeased by frightening them. Others are dislodged from their course by severe criticism, or confession, or shame, or delay[106]
>
> [My approach] will use every available method to put rage to rest. If the rage is really forceful, it will instill a shame or fear in it that it will not be able to resist[107].

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[102] *Ep.* 83.19: *Plures enim pudore peccandi quam bona voluntate prohibitis abstinent.*

[103] Seneca sometimes uses the verb *frango* as a paraenetic term, nearly synonymous with *obiurgare* and *traducere* (Hijmans 1991:27), e.g. in *Ep.* 100.10: *volo luxuriam obiurgari, libidinem traduci, inpotentiam frangi,* and *Ad Marc* I.8: *dolorem frangendus est*. In such contexts, it does not seem possess its common secondary meaning of 'weakening' or 'softening' (L&S, s.v. II) 'Hardening' is the typical Stoic metaphor for habituation; on this, cf. Veyne (2003:61-2) and Graver (2007: 164-71).

[104] *Ep.* 25.1: *Quod ad duos amicos nostros pertinet, diversa via eundum est; alterius enim vitia emendanda, alterius frangenda sunt. Utar libertate tota: non amo illum nisi offendo.*

[105] *Castigatio*: 94.36, 44 (*inponit pudorem*), 95.50; *denuntiatio:* 94.36; *obiurgatio* 94.37, 95.32. Seneca does not clarify the distinction between *castigatio* and *denuntiatio,* but it almost certainly corresponds to the Greek distinction between rebuking (*epitimetikos*) admonition, which "tried to shame the sinner into stopping the misbehavior" (Stowers 1985:133) and the even harsher reproaching (*oneidistikos*) admonition, which "do[es] not have a positive counter to [its] criticism" (Stowers 1985:139).

[106] *De Ira* III.1.2: *Consilium pro moribus cuiusque capiendum erit; quosdam enim preces vincunt, quidam insultant instantque summissis, quosdam terrendo placabimus; alios obiurgatio, alios confessio, alios pudor coepto deiecit, alios mora, lentum praecipitis mali remedium, ad quod novissime descendendum est*. Cf. *Ep. 10,* in which Seneca similarly cites fear (*metus*) along with *pudor* as the only remedy that can keep thoughtless persons from indulging in immoral behavior.

[107] *De Ira* III.39.4: *Omni arte requiem furori dabit: si vehementior erit, aut pudorem illi cui non resistat incutiet aut metum.*

The flexibility of Seneca's therapeutic approach, and his willingness to consider remedies that use one emotion against another, has been described as a sign of his willingness to adopt non-Stoic techniques[108]. But as David Kaufman notes, therapeutic appeals to the emotions can take two different forms: that of counteracting a person's emotion with another, unrelated emotion (e.g. countering anger with fear), and that of eliciting an emotion *about* the initial emotion (e.g. making a person ashamed about being angry)[109]. Seneca's employment of shaming criticism is clearly a form of the second approach, as it introduces a judgment that opposes to the original emotion (e.g. "I ought to be ashamed about being angry, which is a bad thing") and thereby gives the impassioned person a *reason* to reconsider the appropriateness of the beliefs that let to the original emotion[110].

The shaming criticism Seneca employs, then, is fundamentally a way of convincing his addressees that their actions are inappropriate and inconsistent with their values. As such, Seneca's admonitory approach is based on Chrysippus' therapeutic recommendation to approach recalcitrant interlocutors by showing them the irrationality and inapproriateness of their emotions, even according to their own misguided values[111]. The vocabulary of showing and demonstrating, in fact, occurs again and again in his descriptions of this admonitory approach.

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[108] On Seneca's supposed pragmatism and eclecticism, cf. *supra*, pp. 30-31. As Kaster (2010) argues "beyond its firmly cognitive starting point—the view that any passion just is the mind as it has been modified by a judg- ment that is "up to us"—scarcely any of it is specifically Stoic. Much the largest part seeks in various commonsense ways to moderate the way we respond to impressions, while it fights shy of what a Stoic should regard as the fundamental issue and the real evil: the deeply ingrained cultural belief that vengeance is a good".

[109] The first strategy aims to loosen the grip of the original emotion by *distracting* the person with another emotion that is deemed less immediately harmful. As Kaufman (2014:113-14) argues, the emotions elicited in this approach are based on beliefs that only "conflic[t] *incidentally* rather than *intrinsically* with the set of beliefs correlated with the emotion it overrides". Though this approach does not address the beliefs underlying the emotion, it is consonant with the Stoic belief that a person who is suffering from an emotional affliction will not respond to rational arguments (Kaufman 2014:122, cf, ch.1).

[110] Kaufman (2014:113 n.8, 118 n.17) notes that the therapeutic employment of *pudor, verecundia* and *paenitentia* correlates intrinsically with the emotions it overrides. For further discussion, he refers to the third chapter of his dissertation, which I could not consult as it is presently under embargo.

[111] Cf. *supra,* pp. 36-41.

In the *De Ira,* for example, Seneca writes that a philosopher admonishing an angry person should "prove [anger's] shameful and bestial character and make you see how monstrous it is for one human being to rage against another, and how violently anger attacks"[112]. He even argues that a philosopher can pretend to be angry when admonishing his interlocutors in this way, but should never actually be angry[113]. Similarly, in *Letter* 83, Seneca notes that a philosopher arguing with a drunkard should not offer logical proofs or dry declamations proving that drinking is bad. "How much better it is", he argues, "to accuse drunkenness openly and set out its faults" [114]. He proceeds by giving Lucilius a lesson in how to do this:

> "*Say* how disgraceful it is to drink more than one can hold and not know the capacity of one's stomach; *say* how many things men do when drunk which make them blush when they are sober, and that drunkenness is nothing but a voluntary insanity […] "*tell* me why the wise man should not get drunk; show the ugliness and incivility of the condition in actions, not words. And what is easiest: *prove* that those things called pleasures, once they have crossed a certain limit, are punishments"[115].

Seneca's repeated emphasis on the need to tell (*dic)* and show (*ostende, proba*) the truth, rather than merely explaining it, demonstrates that this sort of moral exhortation is a different kind of speech from that of theoretical moral instruction, and is characterized primarily by its vividness, concreteness and directness[116]. Shaming criticism, in other words, does not aim to train a supposed irrational part of the soul, as Dihle, Setaioli and others claim, but to bring a person to the judgment

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[112] *De Ira* III.2.1: *Necessarium est itaque foeditatem eius ac feritatem coarguere et ante oculis ponere quantum monstri sit homo in hominem furens quantoque impetu ruat non sine pernicie sua perniciosus et ea deprimens quae mergi nisi cum mergente non possunt.*

[113] *De Ira* II.17.1. A similar recommendation can be found in Philodemus (Fr. 2, 12, 37 -38).

[114] *Ep.* 83.17: *Quanto satius est aperte accusare ebrietatem et vitia eius exponere.*

[115] *Ep.* 83.18: *Dic quam turpe sit plus sibi ingerere quam capiat et stomachi sui non nosse mensuram, quam multa ebrii faciant quibus sobrii erubescant, nihil aliud esse ebrietatem quam voluntariam insaniam* […] 27: *Dic ergo quare sapiens non debeat ebrius fieri; deformitatem rei et inportunitatem ostende rebus, non verbis. Quod facillimum est, proba istas quae voluptates vocantur, ubi transcenderunt modum, poenas esse.* Cf. *Ep.* 108.12 and *De Ira* III.3.2, in which he argues that it is "necessary to prove [anger's] disgusting and bestial character and to make you see how monstrous it is for one human being to rage against another".

[116] Cf.*Ep.* 38, in which Seneca explicitly distinguishes a conversational, instructional *sermo* from a hortatory, rhetorical *contio* or *disputatio.*

that his or her behavior is misguided and harmful[117]. In dealing with advanced *proficientes*, this could be achieved by pointing out that their actions are at odds with their Stoic beliefs and commitments. But as Chrysippus notes, even the person who is still committed to misguided values can be helped by pointing out that their actions are at odds with their current, non-philosophical beliefs.

7. The Limits of Shaming Criticism

Even though Seneca believes that shaming criticism can be an effective remedy of the last resort he is, as John Schafer has pointed out, "careful not to oversell his techniques" [118]. In *Letter* 94, he concedes that "nothing will be accomplished by applying admonition to serious faults" and that "not even the power of all philosophy combined will remove a hardened and chronic disease from the soul, no matter how hard it tires"[119]. The notion that entrenched vices can bring the soul to a point of insanity or "brutishness" is a familiar Stoic belief, which Seneca discusses in a much-debated section of his *De Ira*[120]. What is new and striking in Seneca, however, is that he repeatedly connects the capacity for responding to admonition with the ability to feel ashamed, and argues that the shameless person can no longer be helped by philosophical admonition.

[117] Cf. *supra.* pp. 33-34.

[118] Schafer (2009:88). Cf. I. Hadot (1986:450), who rightly emphasizes that the fact Seneca "emphasizes that the philosopher must not waste his efforts on unsuitable students [...] in no way contradicts the Stoic theory that all persons are by nature equally capable of realizing virtue". In a similar vein, Setaioli (2013:244) notes that Seneca "maintain[s] that it is the duty of the therapist to attempt treatment of even seemingly desperate cases before giving up, though he does admit that in some cases therapy has no effect (*Ep* 29.3; 50.6; 94.24,31; *Clem* I.2.2; *De Ot.* III.3). On the curability of moral faults in Seneca, cf. Hadot (1969:142-161), and, more generally, Glad (1995:97).

[119] *Ep.* 94.24: *Nihil' inquit 'efficient monitiones admotae gravibus vitiis.'* […] *Ne ipsa quidem universae philosophiae vis, licet totas in hoc vires suas advocet, duram iam et veterem animis extrahet pestem.*

[120] For discussions of the "three movements" of the emotions in Seneca's *De Ira*, cf. Sorabji (2000:55-65), Graver (2007:125-32), and Kaufman (2014:119-26).

In *Letter* 11, Seneca argues that the capacity to blush and feel *verecundia* is "ingrained and inborn" and notes that, even though it is technically a fault (*vitium*) it is nonetheless "a good sign in a young man" which shows promise of his moral progress[121]. In another letter, he similarly writes that the fact that a friend of his still "blushes at his faults", means that he can still be helped by philosophy; this *pudor,* he writes, should be fostered, since "as long as it endures in his soul, there is some room for hope"[122]. He even explicitly warns that when anger "crushes a person's shame", it no longer knows and bounds and becomes "incurable"[123]. The reason why so many people are incurable (*inemendabiles*), he explains in *Letter 97*, lies is the fact that "while in all other crafts errors bring shame to good craftsmen and offend the wrongdoer, the errors of life are a positive source of pleasure"[124].

Consistent with this belief, Seneca refuses to counsel a friend of Lucilius whom he perceives as insufficiently remorseful about his mistakes. Responding to Lucilius' request, he writes that he cannot do anything for his friend because he is not sincerely fed up with his moral faults: "[H]e has been taken in a very hardened state", Seneca writes, "or rather – and this is a more difficult problem – in a very soft state broken down by bad and inveterate habits"[125]. His lack of moral strength, and the fact that he is not sincerely upset with his vices, Seneca concludes, entail

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[121] *Ep.* 11.1: *Dedit nobis gustum, ad quem respondebit; non enim ex praeparato locutus est, sed subito deprehensus. Ubi se colligebat, verecundiam, bonum in adulescente signum, vix potuit excutere; adeo illi ex alto suffusus est rubor. Hic illum, quantum suspicor, etiam cum se confirmaverit et omnibus vitiis exuerit, sapientem quoque sequetur. Nulla enim sapientia naturalia corporis aut animi vitia ponuntur: quidquid infixum et ingenitum est lenitur arte, non vincitur.*

[122] *Ep.* 25.2: *Ne de altero quidem satis fiduciae habeo, excepto eo quod adhuc peccare erubescit; nutriendus est hic pudor, qui quamdiu in animo eius duraverit, aliquis erit bonae spei locus.*

[123] *De Ira* III.41.3 : *Pudore calcato caedibus inquinavit manus, membra liberorum dispersit, nihil vacuum reliquit a scelere, non gloriae memor, non infamiae metuens, inemendabilis cum ex ira in odium occalluit.* Cf. also *De Ira* I.7.4, in which he similarly argues that a mind that has "cut itself off from all reconsideration and regret", he argues, lacks the capacity to restrain itself (consilium *omne et paenitentiam inrevocabilis praecipitatio abscidit).*

[124] *Ep.* 97.10: *Non pronum est tantum ad vitia sed praeceps, et, quod plerosque inemendabiles facit, omnium aliarum artium peccata artificibus pudori sunt offenduntque deerrantem, vitae peccata delectant.*

[125] *Ep.* 112.1: *Cupio mehercules amicum tuum formari ut desideras et institui, sed valde durus capitur; immo, quod est molestius, valde mollis capitur et consuetudine mala ac diutina fractus.*

that “he cannot receive reason or nourish it”[126]. Seneca emphatically rejects Lucilius' anticipated objection that he has misjudged his friend's character, and counters it by arguing that, even though Lucilius' friend may really *think* that he wants to be helped, his dissatisfaction with himself and his hatred of his vices is only temporary.

Even though Seneca clearly sets out the limitations of what admonition can achieve, he is generally optimistic about the capacity of well-timed words of reproach to lead a person back to the straight and narrow. Immediately after conceding that philosophy is not a panacea, he hastens to point out that wisdom “does not therefore cure nothing because it doesn’t cure everything”[127]. In *Letter* 25 too, he vigorously objects to the the anticipated objection that “only young minds can be molded” and that admonitory criticism is useless in dealing with the vices of a grown man[128]:

> I do not know if I will make progress; but I would prefer to lack success rather than to lack confidence. You don’t need to despair about the possibility of curing sick men even when their disease is chronic, if only you stand up against their excess and force them to do and undergo many things against their will[129].

In *Letter* 94, he again firmly rejects the suggestion that a person who is “chained down by vicious beliefs” can no longer be helped by moral admonition. Even “mad people” (*insanos*), he argues, can be cured by means of severe shaming criticism as long as their basic moral disposition is intact[130] :

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[126] *Ep.* 112.3: *Hic de quo scribis et mandas non habet vires: indulsit vitiis. Simul et emarcuit et induruit; non potest recipere rationem, not potest nutrire*. The notion of an inability to receive reason refers to the Stoic belief that individuals caught up in misguided beliefs are unable to recognize true impressions for what they are (cf. *supra,* p. 37).

[127] *Ep.* 94.24: *non ideo nihil sanat quia non omnia.* Cf. *supra* p. 79.

[128] *Ep.* 25.1: *Quid ergo?' inquis 'quadragenarium pupillum cogitas sub tutela tua continere? Respice aetatem eius iam duram et intractabilem: non potest reformari; tenera finguntur.* If the subject of the *inquis* is meant to be read as Lucilius', this would be rather ironic, given that Lucilius himself was only slightly younger than Seneca. Seneca's dismissal of his objection may be read as an attempt to defend his decision to address his *Epistulae Morales* to an older man, a rather unusual project. In other *Letters,* Seneca does mention that it is *easier* to reform younger individuals (cf. *infra,* p. 150-151).

[129] *Ep.* 25.2: *An profecturus sim nescio: malo successum mihi quam fidem deesse. Nec desperaveris etiam diutinos aegros posse sanari, si contra intemperantiam steteris, si multa invitos et facere coegeris et pati.*

[130] The Stoics famously believed that all humans except enlightened sages are “fools”. On Stoic conceptions of sanity and insanity, cf. Graver (2007:109-32).

> This too is false, that precepts are useless in dealing with madmen. Even though they are insufficient on their own, they assist recovery: both accusations and scolding restrain madmen – I'm talking now about the madmen whose mind (*mens*) is shaken, but not gone[131].

8. Shaming Criticism and Stoic Moral Psychology

Seneca does not clarify how he envisions *castigatio* and *denuntiatio*, or how the two are different, though he notes further on in the letter, that *castigatio* works by "imposing shame"[132]. What he does explicitly clarify is that this approach is useful only in dealing with "madmen whose mind is shaken, but *not gone*". The paragraphs immediately preceding the passage quoted above shed light on what he means by this. Responding to the question what admonition can do when a person is caught up in misguided beliefs, he writes:

> In this, namely, that he is freed from them; for his natural disposition (*indoles naturalis*) has not been crushed, but over-shadowed and kept down. Still, it keeps trying to lift itself up again, struggling against bad influences; but when it gets support and is helped by precepts, it grows stronger, as long as chronic illness has not corrupted or annihilated it [133].

A similar claim can be found in the *De Beneficiis*, in which Seneca affirms that moral blindness – a metaphor he uses in *Letter* 94 as well[134] – is temporary and can be cured:

> For a few men their own mind is their best helmsman; next are those who return to the straight and narrow after being admonished; these should not be deprived of a leader. Eyes are closed still possess the power of sight but without using it. But when the light of day enters them, it calls that power back to its function. Tools lie idle unless the craftsman uses them in his work. There can be a good intention (*voluntas bona*) in our minds but it is lethargic sometimes through indulgence and stagnation, sometimes through ignorance of

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[131] *Ep.* 94.36: *Illud quoque falsum est, nihil apud insanos proficere praecepta. Nam quemadmodum sola non prosunt, sic curationem adiuvant; et denuntiatio et castigatio insanos coercuit – de illis nunc insanis loquor quibus mens mota est, non erepta.*

[132] *Ep.* 94.44: *inponere pudorem*. The distinction between *castigatio* and *denuntiatio* likely corresponds to the Greek distinction between rebuking (*epitimetikos*) admonition, which "tried to shame the sinner into stopping the misbehavior" (Stowers 1985:133) and the even harsher reproaching (*oneidistikos*) admonition, which "do[es] not have a positive counter to [its] criticism" (Stowers 1985:139).

[133] *Ep.* 94.31 : *Hoc scilicet, ut illis liberetur; non enim extincta in illo indoles naturalis est sed obscurata et oppressa. Sic quoque temptat resurgere et contra prava nititur, nacta vero praesidium et adiuta praeceptis evalescit, si tamen illam diutina pestis non infecit nec enecuit.*

[134] Cf. *supra.,* p. 37.

duty. We should make it useful and not abandon it to vice in anger [135].

Though the terminology in each of the passages just discussed is different (*mens*, *indoles naturalis*, *voluntas bona*), the underlying conception is clearly identical: all human beings naturally posess virtuous moral inclinations, which may be temporarily obstructed by bad habits, but can be recovered through admonition. [136]. The notion that all human beings are born with natural inclinations toward the moral good, often called starting points (*aphormai*) or seeds of the virtues (*semina virtutum*) is a well-established Stoic conception, which Seneca discusses in several of his *Letters*[137]. What is striking, however, is that Seneca explicitly connects this conception of inborn inclinations with the capacity to feel ashamed about one's misguided moral beliefs and habits, and believes that forms of admonition that elicit feelings of *pudor* will spark a commitment to moral self-improvement. By arguing that our inborn inclination towards the good can manifest itself in the form of blushing or feeling ashamed, Seneca appropriates the popular notion that all human beings possess a moral conscience, which alerts us to our misdoings and torments us with pangs of shame, fear or regret[138]. This strategy of redefining a popular notion in Stoic terms is typical of Seneca, who often creatively adapts Stoic philosophy to the lifeworld of his Roman readers without wavering in his commitment to its fundamental principles[139].

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[135] *Ben.* V.25.5-6.1: *Paucis animus sui rector optimus; proximi sunt, qui admoniti in viam redeunt: his non est dux detrahendus. Opertis oculis inest acies, sed sine usu, quam lumen diei iis inmissum ad ministeria sua evocat; instrumenta cessant, nisi illa in opus suum artifex movit. Inest interim animis voluntas bona, sed torpet modo deliciis ac situ, modo officii inscitia; hanc utilem facere debemus nec irati relinquere in vitio.*

[136] Seneca points out that chronic afflications can permanently destroy this capacity, but suggests that this is unusual, and that even individuals whom many would consider lost cases, such as Marcellinus or the anonymous friend of *Letter* 25, can often be helped by philosophy, as long as the person admonishing them exercises skill and tact. Cf. *pp.* 75-76 and 98.

[137] Particularly *Ep.* 94, 108 and 120, discussed throughout chapters 2, 4, and 5 of this dissertation.

[138] Though scholars have tried to find a philosophical origin for the concept of *conscientia,* it is now widely believed to have originated in popular morality, rather than in any particular philosophical school. For an overview of scholarship on the origins of the notion of *syneidesis/ conscientia,* cf. Bosman (2003:28-49). On the history of the notion of moral conscience, cf. Sorabji (2014).

[139] Cf. Newman (1988) on *gloria,* Roller (2001: 64-126, esp. 88-126) on exemplarity, Bartsch (2006, esp. ch. 3-5) on 'scopic paradigms', Williams (2006) on exile, Asmis (2009) on *Fortuna* and Edwards (2009) on slavery.

In *Letter* 97, his most in-depth discussion of the phenomenon of *conscientia*, he cites Epicurus' dictum that "a guilty person may be hidden but can't be certain of remaining hidden"[140]. But rather than focusing on the fact we can never be certain that others will detect our wrongdoing, he asserts that we ourselves can never avoid the torments of a bad conscience. "Bad deeds are lashed by conscience", he writes, "and the greatest of conscience's tortures is that unremitting anxiety drives it on and whips it and that it cannot trust the guarantors of its own peace of mind"[141]. After affirming the Stoic view that wickedness is its own punishment, he adds: "still these secondary penalties follow soon after the first - constant fear, constant terror, and distrust in one's own security"[142]. Seneca, then, critically and innovatively engages with Epicurus' insight. He rejects the claim that that we should avoid immoral behavior merely for fear that others will find out and argues instead that we *cannot* avoid the fear, shame, and remorse that stem from the moral self-awareness within us.

Many similar passages can be adduced in which Seneca dramatically describes the unremitting mental agony brought about by a remorseful conscience. In *Letter* 43, for example, he argues that "a bad conscience, even in solitude, is disturbed and troubled"[143]. In *Letter* 105, he similarly writes that "those who lack self-control lead disturbed and tumultuous lives […] they tremble after the deed and are embarrassed; their consciences do not allow them to occupy themselves with other matters and continually pressure them to give an answer."[144] In other passages, Seneca omits the term *conscientia*, but writes in similar terms about *paenitentia*,

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[140] *Ep.* 97.13: *Potest nocenti contingere ut lateat, latendi fides non potest.*

[141] *Ep.* 97.15: *Hic consentiamus, mala facinora conscientia flagellari et plurimum illi tormentorum esse eo quod perpetua illam sollicitudo urget ac verberat, quod sponsoribus securitatis suae non potest credere.*

[142] *Ep.* 97.14: *Sed nihilominus et hae illam secundae poenae premunt ac sequuntur, timere semper et expavescere et securitati diffidere.*

[143] *Ep.* 43.5: *Mala [conscientia] etiam in solitudine anxia atque sollicita est.*

[144] *Ep.* 105.7-8: *Securitatis magna portio est nihil inique facere: confusam vitam et perturbatam inpotentes agunt; tantum metuunt [ ] quantum nocent, nec ullo tempore vacant. Trepidant enim cum fecerunt, haerent; conscientia aliud agere non patitur ac subinde respondere ad se cogit.* Cf. further *Ep.* 43.4-5, *Ben.* III.17.3.

describing it as a spontaneous power, which continues to afflict the vicious[145]. By representing *conscientia* as an autonomous power, Seneca vividly dramatizes the Stoic belief that all human beings possess a rational, self-judging capacity, which is always present, even when we attempt to silence it[146].

The reason why humans are tortured by a bad conscience, Seneca argues, is that "there is an awareness of the good (*boni sensus*) deep within even the most misguided souls; people are not ignorant of evil but indifferent to it"[147]. Even if they enjoy the apparent rewards of their bad behavior, they can only do so by suppressing the awareness of their misdeeds, which leads to constant feelings of anxiety. This *boni sensus* is clearly identical to the *voluntas bona* of the *De Benefiicis,* and the *mens* or *indoles naturalis* of Letter 94, which "struggles against evil influences" and grows stronger when it is nourished by precepts[148]. In the concluding paragraph of *Letter* 97, Seneca argues that this *boni sensus* manifests itself, even in corrupted individuals, as a natural aversion towards vicious behavior:

> For this, Epicurus, is the proof that Nature makes us abhor crime, because even in safe circumstances there is no one who does not feel fear. Fortune frees many people from punishment, but no man from fear. Why is this, if not because we have an inherent loathing for what Nature has condemned? So people who are hiding can never count upon remaining hidden, because their conscience convicts them and reveals them to themselves. For it is the hallmark of the guilty to be trembling with fear[149].

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[145] *De Tranq.* II.8 and XVII.1-2; *Vit. Beat.* XII.1; and *De Ira* III.26.3, in which *paenitentia* is reified and appears to stand in for *conscientia.*

[146] Lausberg (1970:68) notes Seneca, in the fragments of his *Exhortation,* emphasizes the *selbständige Macht*) of *conscientia*. Cf Roller (2001:82n30) who notes that "in some cases, however*, conscientia* [in Seneca] seems to indicate not moral self-awareness per se, but rather the locus of that awareness, or the capacity by which that awareness is achieved -i.e. something like the English term "conscience".

[147] *Ep.* 97.12: *Alioquin, ut scias subesse animis etiam in pessima abductis boni sensum nec ignorari turpe sed neglegi.*

[148] *Ep.* 94.31, discussed *supra,* pp. 44, 82.

[149] *Ep.* 97.15-16: *Hoc enim ipsum argumentum est, Epicure, natura nos a scelere abhorrere, quod nulli non etiam inter tuta timor est. Multos fortuna liberat poena, metu neminem. Quare nisi quia infixa nobis eius rei aversatio est quam natura damnavit? Ideo numquam fides latendi fit etiam latentibus quia coarguit illos conscientia et ipsos sibi ostendit. Proprium autem est nocentium trepidare.*

In his *De Beneficiis,* Seneca even argues that the desire to maintain one's reputation and appear good is simply a corrupted version of this inborn desire to be good and stay away from evil:

> Just as there is no law that commands us to love our parents or indulge our children (for it is superfluous to urge us on in a direction in which we're already going), just as no one who needs to be urged towards self-love, which we derive from the moment we are born, just so there is no law that says we should seek the good for itself. The good pleases of its own nature and virtue is so attractive that it is ingrained even in bad people to praise the good. Who is there who doesn't want to be seen as good, who does not, amidst crimes and abuses, seek a reputation for goodness, and who does not even try to endow those things which he undertook without self-control with a semblance of the good, and who does not want to be seen even by those he has harmed as having conferred a benefit?[150] […] People wouldn't do all these things if there weren't a love of what is good and worth seeking in itself that compelled them to seek a reputation contrary to their character and to conceal the wickedness, which they regard with hatred and shame even as they benefit from its fruit.

Seneca, then, argues that the spontaneous shame, fear and remorse we feel when we are confronted with our own misdeeds are ultimately expressions of our natural aversion towards vice[151]. In *Letter* 116, he further supports this conception by arguing that "all emotions originate in a natural beginning" and that emotions are simply natural impulses taken to excess. Nature, he writes, "has entrusted us with care for ourselves, but when you indulge in it too much, it is a fault". As Seneca puts it à propos of the desire for pleasure: "Nature has mixed in pleasure with necessary things, not so that we would seek it, but so that this additional gain would make the things without which

[150] *Ben.* IV.17.2: *Quomodo nulla lex amare parentes, indulgere liberis iubet (supervacuum est enim, in quod imus, inpelli), quemadmodum nemo in amorem sui cohortandus est, quem adeo, dum nascitur, trahit, ita ne ad hoc quidem, ut honesta per se petat; placent suapte natura, adeoque gratiosa virtus est, ut insitum sit etiam malis probare meliora. Quis est, qui non beneficus videri velit, qui non inter scelera et iniurias opinionem bonitatis adfectet, qui non ipsis, quae inpotentissime fecit, speciem aliquam induat recti velitque etiam his videri beneficium dedisse, quos laesit? […] quod non facerent, nisi illos honesti et per se expetendi amor cogeret moribus suis opinionem contrariam quaerere et nequitiam abdere, cuius fructus concupiscitur, ipsa vero odio pudorique est.*

[151] My analysis supports Konstan's suggestion (2009:477) that an ordinary person's moral distress is "based on a groping intuition that we are naturally constituted to experience something better rather than on a 'true belief', as Graver suggests (2007:211)". Cf. my discussion of Musonius Rufus *supra,* pp. 66-67.

we cannot live more attractive. If pleasure would take charge of itself, then it becomes indulgence"[152].

As Seneca's account of moral conscience illustrates, he also believes that, conversely, Nature has mixed in painful feelings with harmful things in order that we might avoid them. It is not so much painful feelings themselves that are problematic, but the fact that we often feel them for the wrong reasons, fearing what others will think of us rather than being ashamed about the fact that our beliefs and actions are morally wrong[153].

9. Conclusion

Though Seneca's practice of using shaming criticism initially seems at odds with his philosophical commitments, this chapter has shown how he creatively appropriates the common admonitory strategy of shaming criticism and how this approach can work within a Stoic framework by arguing that it is a preliminary approach, designed to awaken a person's inborn moral inclinations. As I have shown, Seneca's approach to shaming forms of admonition rests on the belief that even individual who are primarily concerned with what others think about them can be shamed into doing what is right. Initially, they may do the right thing (for example, abandoning their anger) for the wrong reasons (for example, to avoid dishonor). Seneca, however, argues that even the desire to *appear* virtuous is an indication that everyone ultimately desires to *be* virtuous.

[152] *Ep.* 116.3: *Quis negat omnis adfectus a quodam quasi naturali fluere principio? Curam nobis nostri natura mandavit, sed huic ubi nimium indulseris, vitium est. Voluptatem 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.*

[153] Seneca's argument unpacks the Stoic definition of emotions as "excessive impulses" *(hormè pleonazousa*) that are disobedient to reason" Arius Didymus, 65A, cf. Graver (2007:91ff.).

By making this argument, Seneca modifies the early Stoic theory that only the Stoic sage can feel *aidôs* and argues that even ordinary persons can experience genuine, appropriate responses of shame or remorse. But even as he modifies Stoic theory, he does so in a way that is recognizably based on Stoic principles, by arguing that the beneficial responses of shame or remorse he recognizes are natural expressions of our inborn virtuous inclinations, a key Stoic concept.

In doing so, he not only avoids the theoretical inconsistencies produced by Cicero's solution, but also explains why the strategy of exposing the inconsistencies in a person's beliefs and actions causes individuals caught up in misguided beliefs to abandon them. By arguing that shaming criticism revives our inborn moral inclinations, Seneca offers a reason, based on Stoic theory, for *why* this common and time-honored therapeutic strategy works as it does. Seneca's solution, in fact, avoids the inconsistencies in Cicero's approach that Margaret Graver has pointed out[154]. More specifically, it does not rely on the claim that contractions of the soul are bad *per se*, which would lead to the conclusion that all emotional responses, including the *eupatheiai* of Stoic sages, are bad. Rather, Seneca argues that contractions of the soul, as in being ashamed or distressed at one's own beliefs or actions, are natural, and potentially beneficial, responses to the realization that one's beliefs and actions are inconsistent or harmful. With this argument, Seneca responds to the second inconsistency in Cicero's account pointed out by Graver: by arguing that the capacity to feel ashamed has a beneficial function – to jumpstart a person's dormant moral reflexes – Seneca buttresses the Stoic teleological worldview, which implies that universal behavioral capacities, such as the inborn capacity to feel ashamed, should be useful in some way, even if they are easily corrupted.

[154] Cf. *supra,* pp. 64-65.

By responding to the gaps in Cicero's answer to the penitent's paradox, Seneca not only buttresses Stoic therapeutic theory, but bridges a gap in Stoic emotion theory pointed out by both ancient and modern critics, who have argued that the stark bifurcation between *aischunè* and *aidôs* in Stoicism is not just psychologically implausible but theoretically inconsistent. Seneca, in other words, did not aim to sidestep or contradict the Stoic theory of the emotions, as critics often suggest[155]. Rather, his approach expands and strengthens Stoic theory, resolving the penitent's paradox by arguing that Stoic theory can, in fact, allow for morally beneficial feeling-states in between the mistaken emotions of the ordinary person and the *eupatheiai* of Stoic sages[156].

[155] Cf. *supra,* pp. 28-31.

[156] Tad Brennan suggests that Stoic theory never explicitly precluded the possibility of such intermediary states, and arguest hat "we will look in vain for definitive, unambiguous evidence that all emotions are false beliefs" (1998:51, cf. 2003:289).

Chapter 3: Shaming Criticism in Seneca's *Consolations*: A Case Study

In the previous chapter, I discussed Seneca's reasons for believing that shaming criticism could be a helpful therapeutic tool and argued that his explanation is consonant with Stoic moral psychology and Chrysippus' approach to admonition. This chapter will expand this inquiry by focusing on the social and rhetorical dimensions of Seneca's shaming criticism. Through a thematic analysis of Seneca's *Consolations*, which abound in appeals to his addressees' sense of shame, I aim to show that Seneca's approach is not only internally consistent but also rhetorically astute and designed to appeal to his addressees' self-conception and values, while also protecting their social face and nudging them towards a Stoic point of view.

In his *Consolations* to Marcia, Helvia, Polybius, and Marullus, Seneca often appeals to his addressees' concern with their reputation as a way of encouraging them to abandon their grief. Rather than invoking the Stoic argument that grief is based on the wrong belief that death and loss are bad, he points out the inappropriateness of their grief in light of their social status and the moral strength they exhibited in previous circumstances. Scholars have often taken Seneca to task for appealing to his addressees' beliefs and self-conception while supposedly letting Stoic doctrine fall by the wayside[1]. In a recent essay on Seneca's consolations, Marcus Wilson even goes as far as to claim that there is "an almost complete absence of philosophy" in Seneca's consolations[2]. As he puts it:

> Seneca's persuasive strategy relies on the bereaved person's past character and sense of self, on traditional Roman virtues, on his or her surviving relationships, on inspiring examples, mostly historical and mostly Roman, on the conjuring up of other Roman voices of paramount *auctoritas*, like the historian Cremutius Cordus, or the emperor himself.

[1] Abel (1968) discusses the "Roman element" in this consolation and Seneca's "flexible, pragmatic attitude, which leaves considerable room to experimentation". Cf. pp. 30-31 on the tendency in the scholarship to point to Seneca's pragmatism or eclecticism as a catchall explanation for Seneca's pedagogical choices and motivations.

[2] Wilson (2013:105)

Everything is tied to the specific situation and current mentality of the bereaved[3].

In this chapter, I argue that Seneca, while often appealing to his addressees' conventional ethical views and social prejudices, does not commit himself to such views, but rather introduces them as a springboard to get his addressees' attention and show them the irrationality of their behavior. This approach, I claim, is influenced by the approach of the Chrysippus, who argued that a Stoic philosopher could point out the inappropriateness of his interlocutor's emotions not just according to Stoic principles but even according to their own misguided values[4].

Recent scholarship, in fact, has emphasized the social embeddedness of ancient moral admonition as well as the rhetorical and psychological sophistication of ancient thought on the subject[5]. More specifically, modern commentators have emphasized the essential function of the preceptor-interlocutor relationship, the social and dialogical character of *paraenesis*, the important function of honor, and the ways in which the reader shapes a paraenetic text's rhetoric[6]. Lieve Van Hoof, for instance, has convincingly argued for a reader-response oriented approach to ancient works of practical ethics and has offered sophisticated analyses of the rhetorical techniques Plutarch uses in in order to bring his readers over his point of view[7]. Seneca's works, I suggest,

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[3] To support this argument, Wilson (2013:105) points out that Seneca does not refer to any Stoic writings on grief and consolation, even though he was clearly familiar with them. But not citing the works of other philosophers does not mean abandoning philosophical content. With addressees who may not be intimately familiar with Stoic philosophy and may even be put off by name-dropping, Seneca may have simply judged it prudent to present philosophical content in a non-technical, accessible way. As Wilson himself notes later, "there is little sympathy to be found in Seneca for the desire to attribute ideas to specific philosophers or philosophical schools" (p. 107).

[4] Cf. *supra,* pp. 36-40.

[5] The topic of philosophical paraenesis has received attention primarily from New Testament scholars, who employ the concept in their analysis of early Christian spiritual direction. For an overview of this vast body of scholarship, cf. the collection of essays by Engberg-Pedersen (2004) and the monograph by Tite (2009:57-108), who offers a helpful chronological summary of the trends in this field of study.

[6] Sensing (1996a, 1996b, 1998), Perdue (1990), Martin (1992), Thuren (1990, 1993, 1995, 1997, 2004).

[7] As her case-studies convincingly show, Plutarch subtly appeals to his readers' social sensibilities, in particular their feelings of honor, in order to win them over, by associating good and bad moral behavior with specific personality types or social categories, by strategically using different grammatical pronouns, and by setting up loaded polarities intended to direct his readers' responses.

merit a similar approach, which goes beyond generalizations about his supposed stylistic excess or pragmatic eclecticism and pays closer attention to the social contours and rhetorical organization of his arguments[8].

1. The Modalities of Moral Criticism: Severity and Timing

"To make a friend blush", writes Publilius Syrus, "is to lose him". This *sententia* reflects a society in which honor was an important social currency and criticism was often perceived as an attack on it[9]. As a philosopher who offered moral counsel to friends and family members, Seneca had to perform a careful social balancing act[10]. In the words of Brown and Levinson, offering moral counsel, particularly when unsolicited, is a potentially "face-threatening act", that is to say, an attack on one's addressee's social persona[11].

To many critics, both in antiquity and today, Seneca's therapeutic approach has seemed excessively rhetorical and lacking in empathy[12]. Seneca's occasional brashness has even lead

[8] Van Hoof herself (2011:30) points out that Seneca, too, often evokes loaded polarities, and points out that he, even more strongly than Plutarch, aims to direct his readers towards the 'philosophical pole'.

[9] Carlin Barton (2001) discusses the psychological tension produced by this continuous need to respond to challenges to one's honor. Her study shows that Roman authors were very conscious of the fact that even such benign shaming entailed a delicate social balancing-act that could easily go wrong and lead to the termination of friendships and even to overt hostility (pp. 238, 264-265, 269). On honor as a social currency in Roman society, cf. Lendon (1997).

[10] As Michel Foucault (2006:155) rightly emphasizes, Seneca, unlike Epictetus, was not so much a teacher of philosophy as a spiritual director who always advised individuals with whom he had previously existing relationships. Consequently, Seneca was very conscious of the fact that pursuing his therapeutic goals without regard for his addressee's 'face' and personal sensibilities could endanger both the effectiveness of his admonition and his social relationships with them.

[11] Their seminal work on politeness and 'face-saving strategies' has been the basis for many recent studies in the field of Classics (Kaster 2005, Hall 2009, White 2010). Recent scholarship on Cicero's *Letters,* in particular, has shown how this art of social adjustment pervades even his most personal letters; cf. Hutchinson (1998), Wilcox (2005), Hall (2009, esp. pp. 107-135), White (2010, esp. pp. 117-137).

[12] Quintilian famously judged that "he was not so adept at philosophy, but an exceptional persecutor of vices" (*Inst. Or.* X.1.12). In a similar vein, Aulus Gellius notes that many critics in his day objected to Seneca's "foolish and empty vehemence", whereas others thought that he "censures the vices of the times with a seriousness and dignity which are not wanting in charm" (Gell. *N.A.* XII.2.1). Among modern critics, John Henderson has sardonically characterized Seneca's therapeutic approach as a "cold-turkey treatment" featuring an "interminable monastic

scholars such as Marcus Wilson to question the sincerity of his therapeutic intentions[13]. In many of his works, however, Seneca displays a keen awareness of the fact that hurting his addressees' social sensibilities could endanger both the effectiveness of his moral counsel and his personal relationships with them. He even dedicated a book, now lost, to the question of how to repair a friendship after a friend had been offended[14]. In the *De Clementia*, he argues that shaming criticism need not be blunt to be effective. "Which teacher is more worthy of the studies befitting free men", he asks rhetorically, "the one who savages his students if their memory fails or their eye clumsily falters when reading, or the one who prefers to correct and teach with admonitions that bring a blush to the students' cheeks?"[15] Excessively severe or untimely criticism, Seneca argues, only hardens a person's shamelessness instead of convincing them to adopt his counsel[16]. As he puts it in *De Beneficiis:*

> You will make an ungrateful person better by bearing with him, and certainly make him worse by reproaching him. There is no reason for you to harden him in his resolve. If he there is any sense of shame left in him, let him keep it[17].

In the *De Ira*, he similarly cautions that "scolding angry people and actually getting angry in response only riles them." Instead, he argues for a pragmatic, patient approach[18]:

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barrage of ribbing, nagging, and flaying of self, friend, and all humanity" (2005:1, 43).

13 In his discussion of the consolation in *Letter* 99 Wilson (1997:65-6) describes this letter as "an impassioned attack on passion; a non-consolatory consolation in which traditional consolatory motifs abound but the intention to console is denied"

14 Fragment 58-60 Vottero.

15 *Clem.* I.16.3 *Uter autem praeceptor liberalibus studiis dignior, qui excarnificabit discipulos, si memoria illis non constiterit aut si parum agilis in legendo oculus haeserit, an qui monitionibus et verecundia emendare ac docere malit?*

16 Such individuals, who had lost the capacity to blush or feel ashamed, had what the Romans called a "hard" or "iron face" (*os durum / ferreum*). The view that the capacity to feel *pudor* was inborn but could be lost as a result of repeated vicious behavior was common in the Roman world. Cf. Kaster (1996: 12 n. 27, 1997:114) and Barton (2001:227).

17 *Ben.* VII.28.3 *Meliorem illum facies ferendo, utique peiorem exprobrando. Non est, quod frontem eius indures; sine, si quid est pudoris residui, servet. Saepe dubiam verecundiam vox conviciantis clarior rupit. Nemo id esse, quod iam videtur, timet; deprenso pudor demitur.* Cf. *Clem.* I.22.1, in which Seneca argues that a man with an irremediably ruined reputation is exempt from further punishment.

18 *De Ira* III.40.2: *castigare vero irascentem et ultro obirasci incitare est;* cf. I.15.1. As Barton (2001:265) notes, "*pudor* and *ira* were paired in ancient Rome. It was as common a notion in ancient Rome as it is in modern

> We will not attempt to mollify the onset of anger with speech; it is deaf and mad. We will give it room. Remedies are beneficial during periods of remission; we don't test the condition of eyes when they are swollen. By touching them we will aggravate whatever causes them to stiffen. So too with other vices when they are inflamed: rest is what curses the beginnings of diseases[19].

Rather than confronting this kind of anger head-on, a philosopher should approach it "in a varied and seductive manner" (*varie blandeque*), unless he has sufficient authority over his interlocutor to utterly crush his anger[20]. In acknowledging the potential misuses of shaming criticism, Seneca willingly admits to his own miscalculations. In the *De Ira,* for example, he blames himself for reproving a man too frankly, with the result that he has "not so much mended him as offended him".[21] Conscious of the danger of offending his interlocutors and of the Stoics' widespread reputation for lacking empathy, Seneca goes out of his way to defend the fundamental gentleness and humanity of his Stoic approach[22]. When he does employ shaming criticism, he is careful to point out its therapeutic necessity and carefully packages his criticism in a way that will jump-start his addressees' ethical reflexes without becoming a face-threatening act, in Brown & Levinson's terms[23]. Still, Seneca believes that there is often no way around shaming criticism and the feelings of hurt it will bring on and sometimes opts for direct confrontation when he thinks his addressees

psychology that shame leads to rage and revenge.

[19] *De Ira* III.39.2: *Primam iram non audebimus oratione mulcere: surda est et amens; dabimus illi spatium. Remedia in remissionibus prosunt; nec oculos tumentis temptamus vim rigentem movendo incitaturi, nec cetera vitia dum fervent: initia morborum quies curat.*

[20] *De Ira* III.40.1-2: *Castigare vero irascentem et ultro obirasci incitare est: varie adgredieris blandeque, nisi forte tanta persona eris ut possis iram comminuere, quemadmodum fecit divus Augustus, cum cenaret apud Vedium Pollionem.*

[21] *De Ira* III.36.4: *Illum liberius admonuisti quam debebas, itaque non emendasti sed offendisti. Cf. Ben* I.1.4, in which he points out that severity and fault-finding destroys social relations based on reciprocity of benefits.

[22] In *Ep*. 22.7, he writes "there is really no reason why anyone should slander [the Stoic] school to you on the ground of its rashness; as a matter of fact, its caution is greater than its courage". In *Ep.* 121.4, he mentions that "people may decide that I am too zealous and reckless" in "lashing your vices" but boldly pronounces that he will keep doing so for people's own good. Cf. Schafer (2009:79) who argues that "the [Stoic] school was widely considered...unattractively dogmatic, narrow and severe; in Seneca's hands, care is always taken to promote it as generous and flexible".

[23] Cf. *infra*. p. 92.

are ready to benefit from it. In *Letter* 89, for instance, he taunts an imaginary interlocutor as follows[24]:

> Do you expect my remedies to desist when confronted with your vices? In fact, I will talk about them even more, and because you reject them I will perservere. Medicine begins to have an effect just when when a touch makes the diseased body squirm with pain. I will speak healing words even to people who are unwilling to list[25].

The reason why shaming criticism is inevitably accompanied by painful feelings, Seneca suggests, is that our "weak and diseased minds" are afraid of criticism and object to the remedies that will heal it. The emotional distress brought about by admonition is not however, a goal in itself, but a side effect of its healing properties. Responding to an imaginary interlocutor in the *De Ira* who asks whether severe criticism (*castigatio*) is not sometimes necessary, Seneca responds:

> Of course it is; but with moderation, not with anger. For it will not hurt, but will heal under the guise of hurting. Just as we apply a flame to certain spearshafts when they are crooked in order to straighten them, and compress them by driving in wedges, not to crush them, but to take out their kinks, so through pain applied to body and mind we reform the natures of men that are distorted by vice[26].

In light of his awareness of the dangers of overly severe criticism, Seneca proposes a gradual approach to moral admonition. In three similar passages in the *De Ira* and *De Clementia,* he argues that a philosophical ruler, just as a doctor, should employ remedies of gradually increasing severity with his subjects[27]. Though this set of passages offers recommendations for the ruler, rather than for the philosopher or spiritual director, Seneca's own therapeutic approach is based on a similar

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[24] Cf. Graver (1996:22) who rightly notes that "the *tu* of correspondences may or may not include Lucilius" and often stands in for the general reader.

[25] *Ep* 89.19: *Remedia ante vultis quam vitia desinere? Ego vero eo magis dicam, et quia recusatis perseverabo; tunc incipit medicina proficere ubi in corpore alienato dolorem tactus expressit. Dicam etiam invitis profutura.*

[26] *De Ira* I.6.1: *'Quid ergo? Non aliquando castigatio necessaria est?' Quidni? Sed haec sine ira, cum ratione; non enim nocet sed medetur specie nocendi. Quemadmodum quaedam hastilia detorta ut corrigamus adurimus et adactis cuneis, non ut frangamus sed ut explicemus, elidimus, sic ingenia vitio praua dolore corporis animique corrigimus.* Seneca's approach here is similar to Cicero's in *Off.* 136.

[27] The combination of metaphors from the medical domain with terms of punishment is striking, as Seneca himself acknowledges (I.6.4), given that the first aims to heal whereas the second aims to hurt and will sometimes even kill (Cf. XV.1-2 and XVI.3-4). But the combination is not unexpected, given that the terminology of harsh criticism itself is often similar to the terminology of punishment (cf. XVI.1 *coercitio*, correction).

distinction between gentler and more severe remedies, often couched in medical terminology[28].

Just as a doctor will start by changing his patient's regimen, and only resort to bleeding or amputation when there is no other solution, the philosopher-ruler only exercises severity when absolutely necessary[29]. First, he will try to admonish his subjects with mild words and try to "cure their minds by means of gentle words in order to instill in them a desire for what is good, win them over to what is just, and instill in them a hatred of vice, and an appreciation of virtue "[30]. If that fails, he should "proceed to a more severe manner of speaking, which will still only admonish and reprove.[31] At this point, the philosopher-ruler will employ shaming criticism: if a person's errors are frequent but not too serious, he will reprove him in private. If he has "advanced beyond the point where he can be healed by words", however, he will publicly rebuke him, hoping that disgrace will keep him in check."[32]. Even then, however, he will not get angry: a ruler's voice, Seneca insists, should act "neither raging nor resentful but with the face of the law […], not angry but severe"[33]. The point of scolding, after all, is "not to do harm, but to heal under the guise of harming". Seneca compares the work of this healer-critic with that of a metalworker who twists metal shafts not to break them, but to straighten them: in a similar vein, ruler will instill "pain and distress" not to hurt his subjects but to straighten out their character[34].

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[28] *De Ira* I.6, I.15*, Clem.* I.14.1. In *De Const.* XII.3, Seneca describes the Stoic sage's admonitory approach in similar terms as the ideal ruler's.

[29] *De Ira* I.6.2

[30] *De Ira* I.6.3: *verbis et his mollioribus ingenia curare, ut facienda suadeat cupiditatemque honesti et aequi conciliet animis faciatque vitiorum odium, pretium virtutum.*

[31] *De Ira* I.6.3: *transeat deinde ad tristiorem orationem, qua moneat adhuc et exprobret.* Cf. I.15.1 in which he writes that a philosopher-king will heal "both by admonition and by force, softly and roughly".

[32] *De Ira* I.16.2 : *Tu adhuc in prima parte versaris errorum, nec graviter laberis sed frequenter: obiurgatio te primum secreta deinde publicata emendare temptabit. Tu longius iam processisti quam ut possis verbis sanari: ignominia contineberis.*

[33] *De Ira* I.16.5: *non furens nec infestus sed vultu legis* […] *non iratus sed severus*. Cf. I.15.1, in which he writes that the philosopher-ruler will act *non sine castigatione, sed sine ira*. In II.17.1, however, he seems to allow pretending anger, fear or pity for purposes of persuasion (cf. *supra,* p. 78).

[34] *De Ira* I.6.1: *'Quid ergo? Non aliquando castigatio necessaria est?' Quidni? Sed haec sine ira, cum ratione; non enim nocet sed medetur specie nocendi. Quemadmodum quaedam hastilia detorta ut corrigamus adurimus et adactis cuneis, non ut frangamus sed ut explicemus, elidimus, sic ingenia vitio praua dolore corporis animique*

In order to safeguard the effectiveness of shaming criticism, Seneca emphasizes that it should be offered at the right moment, when it is most likely to have its full effect. The notion that moral admonition, including consolation, needs to be administered at the right moment was a matter of widespread agreement among ancient philosophers and rhetoricians[35]. As we saw in the first chapter, Chrysippus argued that a philosopher should not try to offer therapeutic arguments when a person's emotional affliction was still fresh[36]. Seneca echoes this point in several of his works, and carefully observes it in his consolations by justifying his severe approach, as well as its timing, right from the beginning[37]. In *Letter* 29, for instance, he insists that a philosopher should not talk to a person who is entirely unwilling to listen, and criticizes Cynic philosophers such as Diogenes who employ an "undiscriminating freedom of speech", without regard for the fact whether their criticism would actually be helpful[38]. Rather than scattering words of counsel as a farmers scatters seeds, Seneca writes, a philosopher should be like an archer who "ought not to hit the mark only sometimes; be ought to miss it only sometimes". Shaming criticism, he cautions, is a remedy of the last resort, to be used only when other options have been exhausted[39]. Applied too early or out of proper context it can have a debilitating effect upon a person's moral development and will only harden their shamelessness. The best moment to approach a person suffering from an emotional affliction, he writes, is when his condition has temporarily subsided. In *Letter* 25,

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corrigimus.

35 On the right moment (*kairos)* as key notion in ancient rhetoric, cf. Myers (2008), who focuses on the relationship between the 'kairotic moment' and *metanoia* (a concept which covers both back-looking regret and forward-looking transformation) and Sipiora & Baumlin (2002).

36 *Supra,* p. 37. On the notion of 'freshness', cf. Graver (2007:78-9).

37 Similar arguments can be found in Cicero (*Tusc.* III.76), Philodemus (*On Frank Speech* Fr. 71 col. XIIIa) and Plutarch (*Adulat.* 66B.), who warn against using frank criticism when a person is not ready to benefit from it

38 *Ep.* 29.1: *Ideo de Diogene nec minus de aliis Cynicis qui libertate promiscua usi sunt et obvios <quosque> monuerunt dubitari solet an hoc facere debuerin*t. Cf. Malherbe (1986:25, 28) who points out that Seneca (among others) often distances himself from Cynics, and philosophical charlatans as a way of justifying and defining his own approach. On Seneca's relation to the Cynics in general cf. Billerbeck (1979:12-18).

39 *Ep.* 29.3: *Sagittarius non aliquando ferire debet, sed aliquando deerrare; non est ars quae ad effectum casu venit. Sapientia ars est: certum petat, eligat profecturos, ab iis quos desperavit recedat, non tamen cito relinquat et in ipsa desperatione extrema remedia temptet.*

Seneca tells Lucilius that he will be simultaneously severe and cautious with a friend who seems to be open to criticism[40]. Immediately after writing that he will "will take every liberty" with this friend and "hurt his feelings" if he needs to, he adds:

> I think we should deal more carefully with him, to make sure he does not become desperate about himself. There is no better time to approach him than now, when he has a quiet period and comes across as a person who has corrected his faults.[41]

2. Strategies of Shaming in Seneca's Consolations

As we have seen, Seneca is acutely aware of the fact that successful admonition depends on finding the right tone and the right time for shaming criticism. In what follows, I will analyze the admonitory strategies he uses that simultaneously appeal to their sense of shame and offer them an opportunity to save face and prove themselves worthy of his challenge. I will do so by discussing Seneca's consolations to Marcia, Polybius, Helvia and Marullus and by showing how Seneca shames his addressees in a variety of ways, centered around two 'scripts' of shame (*pudor*). I borrow this concept from Robert Kaster, who offers a model for analyzing ancient emotion terms in terms of "scripts", descriptions that cover the process of the emotion in its entirety, "from the evaluative perceptions at its beginning to the various possible responses at the end"[42]. I argue that Seneca's therapeutic approach in his consolations prominently features two *pudor*-scripts, that of "discreditable retraction of the self", the shame that comes from failing to live up to one's abilities, and "*pudor* by association", the shame that comes from being associated with a dishonorable person or group of persons.

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[40] Cf. *supra*, pp. 76, 81.

[41] *Ep.* 25.2: *Cum hoc veterano parcius agendum puto, ne in desperationem sui veniat; nec ullum tempus adgrediendi fuit melius quam hoc, dum interquiescit, dum emendato similis est.*

[42] Kaster (2005:8).

First of all, I will discuss how Seneca justifies shaming criticism in the *Consolatoins* by pointing to its therapeutic necessity. Secondly, I will explain how he simultaneously expresses empathy with his addressees and aims to contain the potential face-threatening effect of his approach. Thirdly, I will show the various ways in which Seneca presents his shaming criticism in a way that challenges his addressees. He does this primarily by contrasting their present emotional weakness with their past moral strength and by arguing that their way of coping with grief is unworthy of their social roles and duties. In doing so, Seneca, aims to show his addressees that their grief brings about a "discreditable retraction" of their self, that is to say, makes them fail to fulfill their duties and act with moral strength. But rather than arguing that his *consolandi* should suppress their grief merely in order to satisfy social expectations, he invokes external viewers as a way of making them look at themselves and understand that they are falling short of their own moral ideals.

2.1. Justifying Shaming Criticism

While the opening sections of the consolation to Polybius are lost, Seneca begins his consolations to Marcia, Helvia and Marullus by explicitly announcing the severity of the letter they are about to read and by justifying his seemingly cold and uncaring approach to their suffering. A good point to start our discussion is the *Consolation to Marcia*, who had been mourning the loss of her son Metilius for three years when Seneca addressed her. After a *captatio benevolentiae,* in which he effusively praises Marcia for her resilient and virtuous character, Seneca argues that the stubbornness of Marcia's grief necessitates drastic measures**:**

> Let others deal with you gently and ply you with soft words. I have decided to battle with your grief, and I will check your eyes that are weary and worn - weeping now, if I may

> speak the truth, more from habit than from sorrow – by measures that you welcome, if possible, and against your will if you don't, even though you embrace and hold onto the sorrow that you have kept alive in place of your son. For what end will your grief have? Everything has been tried in vain. The consolations of your friends, the influence of great men who were close to you have been exhausted. Books, the love of which has been passed on to you by your father, now fall upon deaf ears and hardly provide a brief distraction. Even time, Nature's great healer, which puts to rest even our most grievous sorrows, has lost its power in you alone[43].

Marcia's situation, Seneca implies, is exceptional: the fact that her grief has hardened into a habit and that it has so far been resistant to gentler kinds of remedies, means that a new and more forceful approach needs to be attempted[44]. A similar approach can be found in *Letter* 99, in which Seneca outlines the need to his seemingly severe treatment of their mutual friend Marullus, who was mourning the death of his infant son. At the beginning of the letter, Seneca carefully explains why his stern approach is necessary and what he hopes to achieve with it. Right away, he notes that his letter is not going to be a typical consolation, but rather a letter of reproach (*obiurgatio*)[45]. As he explains to Lucilius:

> I did not think I should deal with him gently, when in my opinion he deserved reproach rather than comfort. When a man is shattered and cannot bear a great wound, we must yield to his grief for a bit; let him satisfy his grief or at least work off the first shock; but those who have begun to indulge in grief should be rebuked right away and should learn that there are certain follies even in tears[46].

As in the *Consolation to Marcia*, the reason Seneca gives for sending Marullus such a stern letter

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[43] *Ad Marc.* I.5-6: *Alii itaque molliter agant et blandiantur, ego confligere cum tuo maerore constitui et defessos exhaustosque oculos, si verum vis magis iam ex consuetudine quam ex desiderio fluentis, continebo, si fieri potuerit, favente te remediis tuis, si minus, vel invita, teneas licet et amplexeris dolorem tuum, quem tibi in filii locum superstitem fecisti Quis enim erit finis? Omnia in supervacuum temptata sunt: fatigatae adlocutiones amicorum, auctoritates magnorum et adfinium tibi virorum;studia, hereditarium et paternum bonum, surdas aures inrito et vix ad brevem occupationem proficiente solacio transeunt; illud ipsum naturale remedium temporis, quod maximas quoque aerumnas componit, in te una vim suam perdidit.*

[44] On habitual emotional states in Stoicism cf. Graver (2007:138-42). As Graver notes (2007:151), misguided value judgments can become "entrenched or 'deeprooted' in the emotive personality of the individual" resulting in character faults, such as a stubborn 'proclivity' (*euemptōsia*) to grief (*epilupia,* p. 143).

[45] The motif of departing from the consolatory tradition is itself a generic *topos*. Cf. *Ad Marc.* 2.1.

[46] *Ep.* 99.1: *[N]ec putavi leniter illum debere tractari, cum obiurgatione esset quam solacio dignior. Adflicto enim et magnum vulnus male ferenti paulisper cedendum est; exsatiet se aut certe primum impetum effundat: hi qui sibi lugere sumpserunt protinus castigentur et discant quasdam etiam lacrimarum ineptias esse.*

is that his grief is becoming habitual and self-indulgent and that only severe criticism will convince him that his grief is exaggerated, irrational, and pointless. The opening paragraph of this letter is particularly harsh and abrupt, undoubtedly in order to shock Marullus and grab his attention: "Are you expecting consolation? Listen to a scolding. Are you suffering your son's death so indulgently? What would you do if you had lost a friend?"[47] The unmitigated severity of this opening salvo has lead Marcus Wilson to suggest that the letter to Marullus is a "non-consolatory consolation, in which the intention to console is denied"[48]. As Margaret Graver has rightly observed, however, Seneca's "harsh position is specifically for those with some commitment to philosophy"[49]. In addition, Seneca's explicit justification for his approach clearly shows that he is, in fact, concerned about how his criticism will be received by his addressees and aims to forestall its face-threatening potential by pointing to his beneficial, therapeutic intentions.

Apart from explicitly arguing that the condition of his addressees requires a drastic intervention, Seneca repeatedly uses medical metaphors to justify his approach. He compares his severe criticism to a form of drastic surgery, which is the only remedy left to treat the festering wound of his addressees' sorrow. As he tells Marcia:

> I would have liked to start your treatment in the first stages of your sorrow: while it was still developing, a gentler remedy would have been sufficient to restrain its force; against deep-seated ills we must fight more forcefully. For this is true also of wounds - they are easy to heal while they are still fresh and bloody. When they have festered and turned into dangerous sores, they must be cauterized and, opened up to the very bottom, must yield to probing fingers. As it is, I cannot approach such hardened grief considerately and gently; it must be crushed[50].

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[47] *Ep.* 99.2: *'Solacia expectas? Convicia accipe. Tam molliter tu fers mortem filii? Quid faceres si amicum perdidisses?*

[48] Wilson (1997:65-6).

[49] Seneca's "rigid idealism", she argues, "appeals to Marullus' own self-concept" (2009:236-9). Cf. Setaioli (2013:242), who argues that Seneca "adopts the s*chēma plagion*, i.e. he purports to be scolding Marullus instead of consoling him, following the well-known rhetorical mode ostensibly pursuing a goal opposite to the one expected by the listener or the reader"

[50] *Ad Marc.* I.8: *Cupissem itaque primis temporibus ad istam curationem accedere; leniore medicina fuisset oriens adhuc restringenda vis: vehementius contra inveterata pugnandum est. Nam vulnerum quoque sanitas facilis est, dum a sanguine recentia sunt: tunc et uruntur et in altum revocantur et digitos scrutantium recipiunt, ubi corrupta in malum ulcus uerterunt. Non possum nunc per obsequium nec molliter adgredi tam durum dolorem: frangendus*

Seneca's claim that he would have liked to employ gentler remedies, had he been able to treat her earlier, highlights the fact that his decision to employ severe remedies is not frivolous or unmotivated, but a necessity imposed by the gravity of her situation. In the consolation to his mother Helvia, who was grieving of Seneca's own banishment, Seneca similarly mobilizes metaphors of medical cures to explain the therapeutic reasons for his drastic and painful approach:

> [W]henever illnesses become so life-threatening that their virulence grows despite treatment, a cure is often effected by opposite methods. Accordingly, I will display to the afflicted mind all its sorrows, all its garments of mourning: this will be no gentle path to working a remedy, but that of cautery and the knife. What shall I gain? I shall cause a heart that has triumphed over so many afflictions to feel shame at lamenting a single wound on a body marked by so many scars[51].

The letter is striking in its visual vocabulary, with it emphasis on Helvia's need to look at her condition and realize how bad it is[52]. As Seneca makes clear, the goal of confronting his mother so vividly with the sources of her grief is to make her feel ashamed (*ut pudeat*) of her current weakness. Rather than presenting her with abstract philosophical truths, he wants to help her understand in a visceral way that her grief is harmful and that only his own severe approach will do to help her fully recover.

As Clarence Glad points out, Hellenistic philosophers often resorted to medical metaphors as a way of illustrating "the function of philosophy, its content, methods, forms and procedures"[53]. The metaphor was particularly popular among the Stoics, who argued that all mental processes had an underlying physical basis[54]. Seneca's appropriation of an extant tradition of imagining

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[51] *Ad Helv.* II.2: *[Quaecumque] usque eo perniciosa sunt ut contra remedium convaluerint, plerumque contrariis curari. Omnis itaque luctus illi suos, omnia lugubria admovebo: hoc erit non molli via mederi, sed urere ac secare. Quid consequar? Ut pudeat animum tot miseriarum victorem aegre ferre unum vulnus in corpore tam cicatricoso.*

[52] Cf. *Ad Helv* II.1 (*proferam, revocare, in conspectus conlocar*e, *admovebo*), *Ad Helv.* III.2 (*ante te posui*).

[53] Glad (1995:66)

[54] In light of this, Tieleman (2003:142-156) notes that the comparison of mental conditions to physical illness was not *just* a metaphor but a meaningful analogy.

psychic pain as akin to bodily ills enabled him to convince his addressees of the urgency of their condition and of the need to accept his treatment—just as a patient with a physical ailment would accept a doctor's prescriptions. The gory metaphor of dangerous festering wounds, which need to be 'torn open' by showing his addressees their afflictions in painful detail, vividly confronts Marcia and Helvia with the seriousness of their conditions and exhorts them to follow his therapeutic prescriptions[55].

As Shadi Bartsch has pointed out, Senecan metaphor often aims to offer an impetus towards moral action, as well as towards changing one's attitude to external goods. In the context of consolation, this entails convincing his addressees that their stubborn grief is not a duty they have towards their suffering or deceased loved ones, but rather a disgusting ailment in of itself[56]. The metaphor aims to point out that they would not be failing in their piety towards the dead by overcoming their grief, but on the contrary, that they are currently failing in piety towards themselves and their families by indulging in habitual grief. In addition, the medical analogy serves as a way for Seneca to skirt the social tensions inherent in this process of offering shaming criticism, by presenting it as a beneficial activity and by presenting himself as a doctor – a comparatively modest occupation – rather than as a Stoic *sapiens*.[57]

In addition comparing grief and affliction with forms of bodily disease and infection, Seneca frequently uses the metaphor of war and conflict to describe his severe admonitory strategy. Often, he depicts grief, or sometimes Fortune, as the adversary against whom his addressees need to fight[58]. At first sight, the combination of the battle metaphor and the medical metaphor may

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55 Cf. Bartsch (2009), who argues that Seneca thinks of metaphor as providing an "impetus to action...potentially lacking from doctrinal content" (201) and can work as "a spur to *action* as well as re conceptualization" (214).

56 Bartsch (2009). Cf. Wiener (2008:86) and *infra.* pp.121-123.

57 On the social status of doctors in antiquity, cf. Pleket (1995).

58 On battle-metaphors in Seneca, cf. Lavery (1980), Armisen-Marchetti (1989:76-79). On the recurrent representation of Fortuna as the adversary, cf. Asmis (2009:115-137).

seem jarring. But in effect, both metaphors entail a similar hortatory aim. By presenting his addressees' situation as an ongoing war with their grief he aims to show them that they should not cherish their grief but rather aim to defeat it as an enemy"[59]. For instance, Seneca writes to Marullus that his goal is to "encourage you for the future, to rouse your spirit against Fortune and to be on the watch for all her missiles, not as if they might possibly come, but as if they were bound to come"[60]. Likewise in the *Consolation to Helvia*, Seneca creatively combines medical and the military metaphors to justify his approach, by portraying her as an experienced veteran who should no longer be afraid of the surgeon's scalpel but "offer [her]self bravely to be healed"[61]. By presenting grief as an element alien to his addressees' being, he aims to pit them against it and show them that they should not view it as a duty towards the deceased, but as an impediment to the fulfillment of this duty. As Claudia Wiener has argued, the military metaphor aims to alter his addressees' reaction against the seemingly severe requirements of his therapeutic approach[62]. By showing them that philosophy is actually an ally in their fight with Fortune, he aims to persuade them to drop their aversion against it.

2.2. Empathy and Reintegration

Notwithstanding his severity, or perhaps rather because of it, Seneca takes pains to express his empathy with his addressees' plight and repeatedly reassures them of his friendly, therapeutic intentions[63]. As Carlin Barton notes, Roman aristocrats did not think of shaming criticism as

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[59] As he tells Marcia, grief often acquires a dynamic of its own, and can reach a point where it is "ashamed to end" (*Ad Marc* I.7)

[60] *Ep.* 99.32: *<Haec tibi scripsi…ut…> in reliquum adhortarer contra fortunam tolleres animos et omnia eius tela non tamquam possent venire sed tamquam utique essent ventura prospiceres.*

[61] *Ad Helv.* III.1: *Sed quemadmodum tirones leuiter saucii tamen uociferantur et manus medicorum magis quam ferrum horrent, at veterani quamuis confossi patienter ac sine gemitu velut aliena corpora exsaniari patiuntur, ita tu nunc debes fortiter praebere te curationi.*

[62] Wiener (2008:81)

[63] Cf. Wilson's claim to the contrary, discussed on p. 55.

humiliating as long as a form of "reassurance and reintegration" accompanies it[64]. Seneca's consolations reveal a keen awareness of the psychological need. In each of them, he expresses his empathy with his addressee's situation and reassures them that he is not expecting an inhuman self-control from them.

In the *Consolation to Marcia*, for example, he offers a *praeteritio* of unnecessarily severe remedies and assures her that he does not "seek to minimize the disaster you have suffered"[65]. To the objection that "it is a heavy blow to lose the young man you have raised", he sympathetically responds that no one would deny this, but that the loss of loved ones is simply part of the human lot[66]. He similarly reassures Helvia that he is not "using the teachings of philosophers to make light of the ills of poverty"[67]. In addition, he expresses his understanding of the painfulness and long duration of her grief: using the so-called 'sociative we' form, he points out that all human beings, himself included, are inclined to look for easy ways to kill the pain of grief, but that, even so, we should try to suppress this inclination and aim for more lasting remedies instead[68]. In the consolation to Polybius, who had lost his younger brother, Seneca similarly emphatizes with Polybius' feelings by joining in his lament about Fortuna's unfairness, without, however, going so far as to affirm this belief. Applying Chrysippus' therapeutic principles, he refrains from directly opposing Polybius' feelings of being treated unfairly but proceeds to show that it is pointless to

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64 Barton (2001:235)

65 *Ad Marc.* IV.1: *Nec te ad fortiora ducam praecepta, ut inhumano ferre humana iubeam modo, ut ipso funebri die oculos matris exsiccem.*

66 *Ad Marc.* XVII.1: *Grave est tamen quem educaueris iuvenem, iam matri iam patri praesidium ac decus amittere.' Quis negat grave esse? Sed humanum est.*

67 *Ad Helv.* XII.1: Ne me putes ad elevanda incommoda paupertatis...

68 *Ad Helv.* XVII.1 : *Scio rem non esse in nostra potestate nec ullum adfectum servire, minime vero eum qui ex dolore nascitur […] Volumus interim illum obruere et devorare gemitus [...] Ludis interim aut gladiatoribus animum occupamus.* Cf. Van Hoof (2011:75), who notes that "the use of the sociative first-person plural is a rhetorical device triggering strategies of imitation in the reader, it also positions the author at the right side of the divide. The result is a tone not so much of lecturing as of pursuing a road together." Cf. further Oliensis (1998:4), who observes this strategy at work in Horace, and White (2010:119), who comments on its occurrence's in Cicero's Letters.

keep resisting what has happened[69].

Even *Letter* 99, with its extremely severe opening, contains empathetic gestures and reassurances of Seneca's therapeutic intentions. Repeatedly, Seneca emphasizes that he is not asking Marullus to show hard-heartedness or lack of feeling and criticizes the unthinking masses who call a man "undutiful and savage- hearted" when he does not show grief and "womanish and weak" when he shows too much of it[70]. He even goes as far as to describe a certain measure of grief and tears as a natural necessity and insists that there is nothing shameful or indecorous about showing grief, as long as it is heartfelt and remains within certain bounds[71]. Affirming his consolatory intentions, Seneca concludes the letter by emphasizing that his severe criticism (*castigatio)* is not a goal in itself, but is aimed at checking Marullus' exaggerated grief and exhorting him to recover from his grief and regain his old self.[72] Seneca's representation of his approach as fair-minded and realistic has a clear rhetorical function: by stressing the reasonableness of his expectations, he makes it difficult for Marullus to resist them or claim they are intolerably severe.

In all of his Consolations, in fact, Seneca emphasizes that he is not seeking to suppress any and all feeling in them. He acknowledges that there is a natural grief that we should allow in moderation. In the *Consolation to Marcia*, for example, Seneca points out that "we feel an unavoidable pang, and even the most courageous souls contract"; our task, he argues, is not to

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[69] *Ad Pol*. I-III.

[70] *Ep*. 99.15: *'Quid? nunc ego duritiam suadeo et in funere ipso rigere vultum volo et animum ne contrahi quidem patior? Minime. Inhumanitas est ista, non virtus, funera suorum isdem oculis quibus ipsos videre nec commoveri ad primam familiarium divulsionem….17: videt aliquem fortem in luctu suo, impium vocat et efferatum; videt aliquem conlabentem et corpori adfusum, effeminatum ait et enervem*. Still, it is noteworthy that Seneca himself calls Marullus' grief a sign of *mollitia* (§2, discussed *infra*, p. 116) and that, in §6, he praises men **"**who have without tears buried sons in the prime of manhood".

[71] *Ep.* 99.18, 21 What Seneca does find fault with is grief that lacks sincerity and is merely concerned with appearances (§17).

[72] *Ep.* 99.32.

suppress this initial sorrow, but to not let opinion add anything to our grief that "goes beyond what Nature commands"[73]. He similarly reassures Polybius that he is not asking him to not express grief at all. Rather, he believes that "reason will have accomplished enough if it removes from grief what is in excess and superfluous"[74]. Seneca even criticizes philosophers who deny that a wise person will ever mourn and calls their prescriptions "harsh rather than brave"[75].

Scholars have argued that such admissions of the naturalness of grief amount to an recognition, whether principled or for merely pedagogical reasons, that the Stoic ideal of *apatheia* is out of reach and that ordinary human beings should be contain to attain the ideal of *metriopatheia*[76]. What Seneca is allowing however, is not moderated emotions, but merely the initial 'pangs' of the emotion, that is to say, the *propatheiai* or 'pre-emotions' that have not yet been ratified by rational assent, and which even Stoic sages still feel[77]. Seneca, in other words, is not conceding that grief cannot or should not be eradicated, but is arguing that it should be brought down to its natural, short-lived form.

2.3.1. Noblesse Oblige: Being One's Own Exemplum

Apart from highlighting the therapeutic necessity of his approach, Seneca repeatedly praises his addressees for having previously succeeded in exhibiting this kind of moderation and restraint,

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[73] *Ad Marc*.VII.1: *'At enim naturale desiderium suorum est.' Quis negat, quam diu modicum est? Nam discessu, non solum amissione carissimorum necessarius morsus est et firmissimorum quoque animorum contractio. Sed plus est quod opinio adicit quam quod natura imperavit.*

[74] *Ad Pol.* XVIII.4: *Noli ergo contra te ingenio uti tuo, noli adesse dolori tuo […] Et tamen dispice ne hoc iam quoque ipsum sit supervacuum; aliquid enim a nobis natura exigit, plus vanitate contrahitur. Numquam autem ego a te ne ex toto maereas exigam.*

[75] *Ad Pol.* XVIII.5: *Et scio inveniri quosdam durae magis quam fortis prudentiae viros qui negent doliturum esse sapientem.*

[76] Grollios (1956:66), Abel (1967:74). Wilson (2013:108) even argues that "it is an underestimation of the strength of Seneca's position to describe it as an acceptance of *metriopatheia*, for that is to convert into a positive doctrine what for Seneca is quintessentially a negative action in disowning the ideal of *apatheia*." On the *propatheiai,* cf. Graver (2007:85-108). As Seneca notes in *Ep.* 11.6, even sages cannot suppress such involuntary emotional reactions.

[77] On the *propatheiai,* cf. *supra*, pp.31-32.

neither suppressing their feelings nor wallowing in them. He praises Marcia, for example, for expressing her grief without publicly indulging in it[78]. Simultaneously, however, he upbraids her for failing to maintain this balanced, composed demeanor in the present. Marcus Wilson cites this rhetorical strategy in support of his argument that there is "an almost complete absence of philosophy" in Seneca's consolations[79]. Seneca's strategy of invoking his addressees' own beliefs and commitments, however, does not entail a retreat from Stoicism, as Wilson argues. Rather, in the spirit of Chrysippus' recommendation to adapt one's arguments to one's interlocutor's individual situation, it is a preliminary method, laying the groundwork for further moral development.

This "mixed method" of combining criticism with compliments was, in fact, a common rhetorical strategy among ancient moralists[80]. Plutarch deftly summarizes the psychology behind this approach:

> Since a brilliant light must not be brought near to an inflamed eye, and a troubled spirit likewise does not put up with frank speaking and plain reproof, among the most useful helps is a light admixture of praise […] for [compliments] not only mitigate the severe and peremptory tone of the censure, but they also arouse in a man a desire to emulate his better self, since he is made to feel ashamed of disgraceful conduct by being reminded of his honorable actions, and is prompted to look upon himself as an example of what is better"[81].

As Plutarch's explanation makes clear, combining criticism with praise allows a philosophical adviser to offer moral criticism in a way that embeds face-saving strategies[82]. By praising his

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[78] *Ad Marc.* I.3: *fudistique lacrimas palam et gemitus devorasti quidem, non tamen hilari fronte texisti.*

[79] Wilson (2013:105), cf. *supra,* p. 90.

[80] Glad (1995:69-88). Seneca's approach of appealing to his interlocutors' concern with their honor and self-conception shows interesting resemblances with his fellow Stoic Epictetus' appeals to his student's *aidôs* (cf. *supra,* pp. 67-69).

[81] Plut. *Quomodo Adulat.* 72C-D: Ἐπεὶ δ' οὔτε φῶς λαμπρὸν ὄμματι φλεγμαίνοντι προσοιστέον, οὔτ' ἐμπαθὴς ψυχὴ παρρησίαν ἀναδέχεται καὶ νουθεσίαν ἄκρατον, ἐν τοῖς χρησιμωτάτοις ἐστὶ τῶν βοηθημάτων ὁ παραμιγνύμενος ἐλαφρὸς ἔπαινος […] οὐ γὰρ μόνον ἀνίησι τοῦ ψόγου τὸ τραχὺ καὶ κελευστικόν, ἀλλὰ καὶ ζῆλον ἐμποιεῖ πρὸς ἑαυτὸν αἰδουμένῳ τὰ αἰσχρὰ τῇ τῶν καλῶν ὑπομνήσει καὶ παράδειγμα ποιουμένῳ τῶν βελτιόνων ἑαυτόν.

[82] On politeness and face-saving phraseology in Cicero's Letters, cf. Hall (2009, esp. Ch. 3: pp. 107-135) and White (2011, esp. ch. 5: pp. 117-137)

addressees' past moral strength, Seneca not only strokes their egos but prevents them from getting offended by his criticism and challenges them to match the exemplary behavior they exhibited in the past, a moral standard that should seem within reach[83].

This strategy is a straightforward application of Kaster's script of "*pudor* as discreditable retraction of the self", combining criticism of his addressees' current "discreditable retraction" with praises of their former "creditable expansion", when they successfully dealt with similar challenges[84]. Shaming criticism, in other words, is held up as a test of his addressees' moral fiber, which they must pass in order to avoid dishonor. In a similar way as his medical and military metaphors, this form of 'trial by taunting' forces his addressees to step back from grief and self-absorption and critically look at themselves[85].

This is so even when Seneca asks them to consider how they are perceived by others: rather than exhorting them to merely satisfy the expectations of others, Seneca wants to show his addressees how their behavior reflects on themselves and how they have failed to "properly extend themselves" – in Kaster's terminology – and act as autonomous, consistent moral agents. The external observers Seneca invokes, in other words, project a challenging description upon his addressees that forces them to look at themselves and invites them to regain their moral agency and fulfill the duties associated with their position and life-choices[86].

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[83] Cf. *Ad Marc.* 16.4 and *Ep.* 11.10 where Seneca anticipates the objection that *exempla* of heroic men of the past are hard to follow, and suggests customized *exempla* for emulation.

[84] Cf. *supra*, pp. 98-99.

[85] Erving Goffman (1956: 267) describes 'trial by taunting' as "a test that every young person passes through until he develops the capacity to maintain composure"; cf Barton (2001:233) on the applications of this concept to ancient shaming practices.

[86] As Bartsch (2006:200) notes, "while Seneca will sometimes represent the practice of self-speculation in the more traditionally Roman terminology [...] of living up to the expectations and norms of one's social equals, far more often this other is an idealized other rather than a real one, so that the actual practice of exemplary viewing is largely an imaginative or indeed impossible interaction". With Douglas Cairns, we might say that Seneca's invocation of the watching crowd "is only a means to bring a previously unconsidered interpretation to his or her attention". As Cairns " (Cairns 1993: 17-18) notes, "to consider the hypothetical judgments of a fantasy audience is to see oneself in a different light, to step back from self-absorption and take a detached view.

2.3.2 Shaming Criticms and Stoic Persona Theory

This aspect of Seneca's approach is foregrounded most clearly in Seneca's *Consolation to Polybius.* Early on in the letter, Seneca attempts to restrain Polybius' grief by shaming him and explicitly invoking his high position in society:

> This too may keep you from excessive grief – if you remind yourself that nothing you do can be kept secret. Public opinion has assigned to you an important position, which you must guard. A crowd of consolers stands around you, examines your mind and observes how much strength it has against distress, and whether you only know how to deal with prosperity or whether you can also bear adversity like a man. Your eyes are being watched[87].

The invocation of the scrutinizing gaze of the Roman people simultaneously flatters Polybius by emphasizing his important position in society and shames him by implying that his current grief is inconsistent with it[88]. But even though Seneca begins the letter by invoking external viewers, he does not exhort Polybius to suppress his grief merely in order to satisfy the crowd's expectations[89]. As his mention of Polybius' *magna persona* makes clear, Seneca is primarily concerned with the social and moral *persona* Polybius himself has sought to embody. This approach is clearly inspired by Panaetius' four-*persona* theory, which suggests that individuals can learn to be virtuous by enacting both their God-given and self-chosen roles (*personae*) in a consistent and rational

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[87] *Ad Pol.* VI.1: *Potest et illa res a luctu te prohibere nimio, si tibi ipse renuntiaveris nihil horum quae facis posse subduci. Magnam tibi personam hominum consensus inposuit: haec tibi tuenda est. Circumstat te omnis ista consolantium frequentia et in animum tuum inquirit ac perspicit quantum roboris ille aduersus dolorem habeat et utrumne tu tantum rebus secundis uti dextere scias an et adversas possis viriliter ferre: observantur oculi tui.*

[88] As Abel (1967:80) notes, Seneca flatteringly treats Polybius, a freedmen, as a full member of the *civitas Romana* and an heir to its aristocratic moral tradition.

[89] Seneca explicitly indicates that this appeal to Polybius' concern with his reputation is only a first step in the process of consolation: at the beginning of this section, he points to the provisional character of the argument that will follow and at the beginning of the next section, he mentions that, so far, he has only dealt with the "lighter remedies" (*leviora remedia*).

manner[90]. In his *De Constantia,* Seneca explicitly recognizes that individuals who "still conduct themselves in accordance with public opinion "could attain moral constancy by fulfilling the roles assigned to them by their birth and reputation:

> The more honorable a man is by birth, reputation, and birth, the more heroically he should bear himself, remembering that it is the tallest ranks that stand in the front of the battle line. Let him bear insults, shameful words, disgrace, and all other forms of dishonor just as he would bear the enemy's war-cry, and the darts and stones from afar that rattle around a soldier's helmet but cause no wound […] Even if you are under pressure and threatened by hostile force, still it is disgraceful to retreat; stand the ground that Nature has assigned to you[91].

The way in which Seneca introduces his injunction to suppress grief in order to conform to social expectations ("this matter too may restrain you from excessive grief") suggests that this appeal to Polybius' status anxiety is part of a provisional approach, preparing him to accept philosophical cures to regain his self-control moral agency[92]. In the next paragraph, he explicitly states that Polybius has, in fact, chosen to attract all this attention to himself by accepting a prominent position in the imperial administration. With this remark, Seneca enjoins Polybius to conform himself both to his third persona, his social position, and his fourth, his self-chosen aims and ambitions. In light of his important position in society, Seneca argues, Polybius now needs to model his behavior on

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[90] Panaetius proposed this theory as a heuristic tool to help people decide on the right course of action (Gill 1994:341). To facilitate this deliberative process, he encouraged them to act in a way that would best align with each of their four *personae*: 1) their common human nature as rational agents capable of self-direction and virtue, 2) their specific nature as individuals, 3) their social position and status and 4) the life-project (*bios*) they had chosen for themselves. Panaetius' theory appears to be a systematic articulation of Chrysippus' recommendation to adapt one's therapeutic approach to one's interlocutor's current beliefs and social circumstances. The most detailed discussions of the four-*personae* theory can be found in Gill (1988 and 1994). On Seneca's unusual application of the concept of *persona,* cf. Bartsch (2006:216-229)

[91] *De Const.* XIX.3-4 : *Quo quisque honestior genere fama patrimonio est, hoc se fortius gerat, memor in prima acie altos ordines stare. Contumelias et verba probrosa et ignominias et cetera dehonestamenta velut clamorem hostium ferat et longinqua tela et saxa sine vulnere circa galeas crepitantia; iniurias vero ut vulnera, alia armis, alia pectori infixa, non deiectus, ne motus quidem gradu sustineat. Etiam si premeris et infesta vi urgeris, cedere tamen turpe est: adsignatum a natura locum tuere. Quaeris quis hic sit locus? Viri.* As Bartsch notes (2006:227) "with Seneca's emphasis on the falsity of the public persona, it is hard to imagine what a sustained propriety would look like, or the congruent harmony of all four personae from Cicero's *De Officiis*".

[92] *Ad Pol.* XI.6: *Potest et illa res a luctu te prohibere nimio*.

the high expectations of character attached to it:

> [T]here are many things that other people's opinion about your learning and your character do not permit you to do – people demand much of you, expect much. If you wanted to be free to do everything, you should not have turned everyone's eyes towards you; as it is, you must live up to what you promised. All those who praise the works of vour genius, who take copies of them, who, even though they have no need of your greatness, have need of your genius, keep watch on your mind. Thus you can never do anything unworthy of your claim to be an accomplished and erudite man without making many people regret their admiration for you[93].

Ultimately, then, Seneca turns Polybius' attention to the eyes of the public in order to turn his own eyes back to his self-chosen commitments as a public servant and a writer (another self-chosen *persona*) to highlight the discrepancy between his lofty self-conception and his demeaning emotional behavior[94]. This appeal for self-scrutiny under the eyes of others, in other words, provides a 'jump-start' to attain a deeper level of voluntary conformity with the moral good. A few paragraphs later, Seneca again mentions Polybius' writings and argues that it would be shameful for him to fall short of the values to which he has committed himself in them:

> Read with what great spirit you have thundered in magnificent words; you will be ashamed to suddenly break down and fall short of such greatness of speech. Let it not happen that everyone who admired your writings as a model should wonder how such a frail spirit produced such great and firm works[95].

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[93] *Ad Pol.* VI.3: *Multa tibi non permittit opinio de studiis ac moribus tuis recepta, multum a te homines exigunt, multum expectant. Si volebas tibi omnia licere, ne convertisses in te ora omnium: nunc tantum tibi praestandum est quantum promisisti. Omnes illi qui opera ingenii tui laudant, qui describunt, quibus, cum fortuna tua opus non sit, ingenio opus est, custodes animi tui sunt. Nihil umquam ita potes indignum facere perfecti et eruditi viri professione ut non multos admirationis de te suae paeniteat.* Further on, he similarly warns Polybius that his grief leads him down a shameful path: "save yourself from the shame of having everyone think that your grief for a single person counts for more than the many sources of comfort you have" (XII.1).

[94] As Bartsch (2006:200) notes, "while Seneca will sometimes represent the practice of self-speculation in the more traditionally Roman terminology […] of living up to the expectations and norms of one's social equals, far more often this other is an idealized other rather than a real one, so that the actual practice of exemplary viewing is largely an imaginative or indeed impossible interaction". With Douglas Cairns (1993:17-8), we might say that Seneca's invocation of the watching crowd "is only a means to bring a previously unconsidered interpretation to his or her attention".

[95] *Ad Pol.* XI.6 : *Lege quanto spiritu ingentibus intonueris verbis: pudebit te subito deficere et ex tanta orationis magnitudine desciscere. Ne commiseris ut quisquis exempto modo scripta tua mirabitur e*

Seneca, then, argues that Polybius owes it to *himself*, rather than to any external onlookers, to restrain his grief in light of the moral values to which he has committed himself in his literary works. Rather than preaching to Polybius about why mourning the loss of a brother is wrong according to *Stoic* ideas, he aims to show him that even his own values and self-conception should lead him to the realization that he should restrain his grief.

2.3.3. Grief, Greatness of Soul and Roman Manhood

As part of this effort, Seneca explicitly appeals to Polybius' self-conception and his pride as a reputable Roman man. In addition to accusing Polybius of not living up to his own *persona* as an older brother and a high-ranking imperial administrator, Seneca shames him on two different occasions by accusing him of acting in a way that befits a plebeian or a woman, rather than a man of his social status. Roman decorum, after all, required that a man, especially if he was of high status, would only withdraw from his duties for nine days in order to deal with his grief. For women, who were commonly considered to be less capable of emotional self-regulation, a grieving period of ten months up to a year was regarded as normal[96]. For Seneca, this social norm provided fodder for a blunt, direct attack on Polybius' grief, shaming him for acting in a way that is usually associated with women:

> Nothing vulgar, nothing lowly is fitting for you. But what is as lowly and feminine as giving oneself over to sorrow and being consumed by sorrow? […] You are not allowed to weep excessively and that it not the only thing you're not allowed to do […] There are many things you are not allowed to do that the lowliest wretch lying about in a corner may do[97].

[96] Prescendi (2000:107). In modern psychological terms, women were expected to engage in a "loss-oriented coping style" whereas men were expected to employ a "restoration oriented coping style" (Stroebe, cited in Archer 1999:106).

[97] *Ad Pol.* VI.2: "Nihil te *plebeium* decet, nihil *humile*. Quid autem tam *humile* ac *muliebre* est quam consumendum se dolori committere?" [..] VI.4: *Non licet tibi flere inmodice, nec hoc tantummodo non licet …Multa tibi non licent quae humillimis quoque et in angulo iacentibus licent.* It should be noted that Seneca associates Polybius' behavior

Further on, in the consolation, he similarly taunts Polybius as follows:

> Surely you would do very well to imitate those who, when they might have been indignant that they were not exempt from this evil, decided that it was not injustice, but the law of mortality which in this one matter put them on a level with the rest of mankind, and endured what had happened to them neither with too much bitterness and resentment, nor in a weak and womanly fashion; for it is not human not to feel misfortunes, and it is not manly not to bear them[98].

Seneca's unconcealed appeal to Polybius' views on social rank and gender roles appears to contradict the Stoic view that all human beings, regardless of gender, legal status, or social class, are capable of pursuing virtue[99]. Arguments such as these have been interpreted as a sign that Seneca's philosophy fails "to liberate itself from its cultural origins", as Thomas Habinek puts it[100]. In a similar vein, Rita Degl'Innocenti Pierini has argued that Seneca's consolation to Polybius is dominated by "socio-political" rather than philosophical arguments, and argues that his approach conflicts with the Stoic belief that *virtus* is unconditioned by social position[101].

Seneca's appeal to his addressees' conception of manhood is clearly a variation of the shame-script of "*pudor* as discreditable retraction of the self" discussed earlier[102]. We might even

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not just with that of women, but also with that of the lower social classes (*humiles).* Cf. *Ad Marc.* 25.3, in which he similarly exhorts Marcia to "blush to have a low (*humilis*) or common (*vulgare*) thought".

98 *Ad Pol.* XVII.2: *Optime certe illos imitaberis qui, cum indignari possent non esse ipsos exsortes huius mali, tamen in hoc uno se ceteris exaequari hominibus non iniuriam sed ius mortalitatis iudicaverunt tuleruntque nec nimis acerbe et aspere quod acciderat nec molliter et effeminate; nam et non sentire mala sua non est hominis et non ferre non est viri.*

99 In *Ep.* 115.6, Seneca argues that the mind can be freed from delusion even if poverty, lowliness and dishonor stand in the way. And in *Ad Helviam* IX.3, he similarly argues that the fact Romulus lived in a hut is proof that even "a humble (*humilis*) hovel grants access to the virtues". Cf. *Ad Helv.* XVI.1, quoted *infra,* p. 116, on the equal moral strength of women.

100 Habinek (1992:194) argues that, rather than offering a truly fresh philosophical view, Seneca uses a variety of rhetorical strategies "to mask the dependence of his new life on the material and psychological make-up of the old". Cf. Lavery (1997:3) who discusses Seneca's "ability or inability to reflect [Stoic] cosmopolitan attitudes of openness to and acceptance of other human beings"

101 Degl'Innocenti Pierini (1997: 220-23). Cf. *Ben* III.18.2. Pierini (1997:225-32) compares Seneca's arguments with the consolations in Cicero's *Ad Familiares* and argues that they are largely similar in their appeal to conventional social values.

102 As Kaster notes (2005:46-7), a gendered or class-based application of this script, comprising any "act, or failure to act [that] invites the label 'pusillanimous', 'childish', 'servile' or 'womanish'" is very common in Roman texts. He even goes as far as to say that "we can summarize this form of *pudor* by saying that you should experience it

say that this kind of shame-appeal combines the script of "*pudor* as a discreditable retraction of the self" with that of "*pudor* by association", the shame that comes from being associated with a shameful person or group of persons[103]. The overlap between gender categories and moral categories at the heart of this *pudor*-script reflects the instability of gender identities in the ancient Roman world. As Maud Gleason has argued, the radical indeterminacy of Roman masculinity entailed "the ever present possibility of slipping into effeminacy awaited the lukewarm or the unwary"[104].

Even philosophers mobilized this fear of slipping into behaviors that would reveal a male subject's underlying effeminacy or servility. Cicero argues that mourners should be "chide[d] for being weak and womanish in spirit"[105]. Panaetius too repeatedly connected his key moral concepts of seemliness (*decorum*) and greatness of soul with manliness and argued that men should be careful to avoid effeminacy in their behavior and should always act in manly and great-spirited way[106]. This strong connection between gender categories and moral categories is even reflected in the Roman moral vocabulary: vir-tus, after all, is what a real man (*vir*) does[107].

Though Seneca appeals to his addressees' concern with their masculinity, he nevertheless undercuts many of the attending stereotypes and preconceptions. As Borgo has argued, Seneca does not just passively adopt such traditional commonplaces, but reinterprets them in a personal fashion and subverts their conventional uses in the very act of recognizing them[108]. This strategy

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when you have failed to play vigorously the role of an adult free man" (2005:47).

[103] Cf. *infra*, p. 173.

[104] Gleason (1999:75, cf. passim and 1994), cf. Barton (2001:38).

[105] Cic. *Tusc.* IV.60: *obicimus maerentibus imbecillitatem animi ecfeminati*, translation Graver. (2002)

[106] Cic, *Off.* I.14, 61, 94, 129. On Cicero as a source for reconstructing Panaetius' thought, cf. *supra,* p. 66.

[107] As Langlands (2004:120) notes, "trying to describe a woman as morally excellent exposes the limitations of the Latin language, and, like many Latin authors, Seneca takes a certain delight in foregrounding the ensuing paradox". Cf. Wildberger (2013:316-18) who similarly argues that "Seneca's praise of the Stoic *vir invictus* […] draws on the Roman discourse of manliness" and concludes that "in Seneca, Stoicism and typically Roman manliness blend harmoniously".

[108] Borgo (1978:73-74).

of stripping the traditional meanings of a concept and refiguring it on his own terms is a common Senecan strategy that, as Matthew Roller has noted, occasionally leads to contradictory strains in his philosophy[109].

An excellent illustration of such a contradictory moment can be found in *Letter* 99. In this letter, as in the letter to Polybius, Seneca accuses Marullus of abandoning his previous greatness of spirit by succumbing to unending grief and giving in to *mollitia* (effeminacy, softness)[110]. Further on in the letter, however, Seneca backtracks (consciously or not) from this accusation by criticizing the unthinking masses who call a man "womanish and weak" when he shows too much grief and "undutiful and savage-hearted" when he does not show enough of it[111].

An even more striking illustration of Seneca's shrewd manipulation of gender prejudices can be found in his consolations addressed to women. In several passages in the Consolations to Marcia and Helvia, Seneca cites the traditional bias about women's general lack of self-control and decries the "lamentations and outcries and the other demonstrations by means of which women usually vent their noisy grief"[112]. The way in which Seneca employs such traditional tropes, however, actually subverts stereotypical gender categories and suggests that, from a moral point

[109] Wilcox (2012:103), Roller (2001:87).

[110] *Ep*. 99.2: *'Solacia expectas? Convicia accipe. Tam molliter tu fers mortem filii? Quid faceres si amicum perdidisses? Decessit filius incertae spei, parvulus; pusillum temporis perît. Causas doloris conquirimus et de fortuna etiam inique queri volumus, quasi non sit iustas querendi causas praebitura: at mehercules satis mihi iam videbaris animi habere etiam adversus solida mala, nedum ad istas umbras malorum quibus ingemescunt homines moris causa.*

[111] *Ep*. 99.17: *[V]idet aliquem fortem in luctu suo, impium vocat et efferatum; videt aliquem conlabentem et corpori adfusum, effeminatum ait et enervem*

[112] *Ad Helv.* III.2: *Lamentationes quidem et eiulatus et alia per quae fere muliebris dolor tumultuatur*, cf. XIV.2: *muliebri inpotentia*, XVI.1 *pertinacia muliebris maeroris.* In the consolation to Marcia, he further affirms that women are "wounded more deeply" by grief (VII.2) and need to be especially careful in observing moderation (XI.1). Cf. *Ep.* 63.13.4, in which he mentions *illis mulierculis [...] vix retractis a rogo, vix a cadavere revulsis, cui lacrimae in totum mensem duraverint.* A Roman aristocratic man was expected to mourn no longer than the ritual *novemdial* and then go back to normal business (Treggiari (1998:14). For women, who were regarded as less capable of controlling their emotions, a grieving period of up to a year was commonly accepted (Prescendi 2000:107).

of view, gender is not determined by biological sex[113]. In both of his consolations to women, Seneca starts of by lavishly praising Marcia's and Helvia's previous moral strength and greatness of soul, and by arguing that they are so far removed from womanly weakness that they cannot pretend that it excuses their shameful behavior[114]. Consider the introduction to the *Consolation to Marcia*:

> If I did not know Marcia, that you were as far removed from female weakness of mind as from all other vices, and that your character was looked upon as a pattern of ancient virtue, I whould not dare to confront your grief, an emotion that even men willingly cling to and brood over, nor would I have conceived the hope of convincing you to acquit Fortune of your loss, at a time so unfavorable, in front of a judge so unyielding, and against a charge so hateful. But your proven strength of mind and your bravery, confirmed by a severe trial, have given me the confidence [to make an attempt][115].

After vividly discussing how well Marcia coped with the death of her father, he again praises her strength and argues that her greatness of spirit, a quality typically associated with men, bars her from being consoled in a more lenient fashion:

> This greatness of your spirit prohibits me from considering your sex, or indeed your face, which, since sorrow first covered it, has been veiled in continual sadness for many years[116].

In the consolation to Helvia too, Seneca compares Helvia's previous moral strength with her current weakness and tells her explicitly that she should feel ashamed about this loss of self-control and that her sex is not an argument for why her grief should last longer:

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[113] Cf. Ker (2009:93)

[114] Greatness of soul is a key notion in Seneca's philosophy and along with the ideal of freedom, among the most highlighted tropes in the consolations On the important position of *magnitudo animi* in Seneca, cf. Hachmann (1995: 284-313). Cf. further Ad Helv. XIX.7.

[115] *Ad Marc.* I.1: *Nisi te, Marcia, scirem tam longe ab infirmitate muliebris animi quam a ceteris uitiis recessisse et mores tuos velut aliquod antiquum exemplar aspici, non auderem obviam ire dolori tuo, cui viri quoque libenter haerent et incubant, nec spem concepissem tam iniquo tempore, tam inimico iudice, tam invidioso crimine posse me efficere ut fortunam tuam absolveres. Fiduciam mihi dedit exploratum iam robur animi et magno experimento adprobata virtus tua.*

[116] *Ad Marc.* I.5: *Haec magnitudo animi tui vetuit me ad sexum tuum respicere, vetuit ad vultum, quem tot annorum continua tristitia, ut semel obduxit, tenet.*

> Accordingly, you have no excuse to invoke your sex as an excuse for your persistent grief, since your virtues have led you away from it; you should be as far removed from feminine tears, as you should be from feminine vices[117].

From a moral point of view, in other words, Marcia and Helvia belong to the category of manhood, rather than to their biological sex, and ought to feel ashamed if they revert to femininity in their behavior. This is conveyed unambiguously by his claim that the *exempla* of women he is about to offer Helvia acted with a "*virtus* that placed them in the ranks of great men"[118]. Amanda Wilcox has argued that "the attribution of *virtus* to women in these works is more a rhetorically expedient side effect of Seneca's ethical project than evidence of his feminism"[119]. Seneca's ingenious manipulation of gender categories, however, may be interpreted not merely as self-serving rhetoric but as a product of the indeterminacy of Roman gender-identities[120].

In other passages, Seneca makes it explicit that the problem of uncontrolled grief is restricted to "certain women"[121]. "Who has stated", he asks in the *Consolation to Helvia*, "that Nature has been ungenerous to women's natures and has narrowly restricted their virtues? They have just as much energy, believe me, just as much aptitude for noble actions, should they wish; they endure pain and toil as well as we do, if they have grown accustomed to them"[122]. Thus, even though Seneca endorses the conventional belief that women are emotionally weaker than men he believes that they too can transcend themselves and ascend to *virtus,* even if they allegedly lack a

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[117] *Ad Helv.* XVI.4: *Non potes itaque ad optinendum dolorem muliebre nomen praetendere, ex quo te virtutes tuae seduxerunt; tantum debes a feminarum lacrimis abesse quantum <a> vitiis.*

[118] *Ad Helv.* XVI.6: *quos conspecta virtus inter magnos viros posuit.*

[119] Wilcox (2006:93). Cf. Nussbaum (2002) on the "incomplete feminism of Musonius Rufus".

[120] As Carlin Barton (2001:48) notes: **"**Because it did not come naturally for a male to have *virtus*, it was no less natural for the Romans to attribute *virtus* to a female, who, equally unnaturally, showed exceptional will and energy".

[121] *Ad Helv.* XVI.2: *quasdam feminas.*

[122] *Ad Helv.* XVI.1: *Quis autem dixit naturam maligne cum mulierum ingeniis egisse et virtutes illarum in artum retraxisse? Par illis, mihi crede, vigor, par ad honesta, libeat, facultas est; dolorem laboremque ex aequo, si consuevere, patiuntur.*

man's natural aptitude for virtuous behavior.

As Gretchen Reydams-Schils has argued, Seneca's assessment of women is "mixed", not entirely traditional but not revolutionary either[123]. This assessment is clearly supported by the consolations, which contain both conventional biases about women and affirmations of their moral capabilities[124]. Even if Seneca's women are "conformist even in their heroism", as Lavery puts it, his consolations addressed to women clearly reveal his deep-seated belief in women's natural capability for virtuous behavior, notwithstanding the intellectual and emotional obstacles they need to surmount[125]. Seneca's *Consolations*, in other words, exploit the ambiguity and indeterminacy of Roman social categories, to the point where their constraining power gives way in favor of the individual's inner strength and moral autonomy that can, and should, surmount traditional categories.

2.3.4. Shameful Remedies

A variant of this approach to appeal to his addressee's self-conception can be found in Seneca's attempts to show his addressees that other, less severe consolatory approaches would be useless and shameful, in light of their being courageous, high-minded Roman aristocrats. Failing to accept the remedies he offers, Seneca implies, would amount, in Robert Kaster's terminology, to a "discreditable retraction of the self".

In *Letter* 99, for instance, Seneca suddenly interrupts his direct address to Marullus in order

[123] Reydams-Schils (2005:167)

[124] Other passaging revealing conventional biases are: *Ad Helv.* III.3, where he mentions' women's *impudicitia*, XIX.6, where he mentions his belief that women should not be seen in public, and *Ad Marc.* XXIV.3, where he writes that Marcia should be happy that her son died before he could be corrupted by a woman (!).

[125] Lavery (1997:12). Wilcox (2006:87) too points out that in Seneca's imagination, the *spheres of action* for practicing the virtues still differ according to gender and that "female heroism takes place chiefly within the traditional biological and social limits of female action".

to start an imaginary conversation with the Epicurean Metrodorus. From the very beginning, he rhetorically assumes that Marullus will accept his arguments against Metrodorus' approach[126]. Just as he defended his admonitory approach in *Letter* 29 by setting up a contrast with the untimely and aimless severity of the Cynics, he now defends it in contrast with the useless and disgraceful approach of the Epicurean Metrodorus[127]. He vehemently criticizes Metrodorus' suggestion that we should try to soften our grief by mixing it with pleasures and tries to enlist Marullus' support against him by portraying the Epicurean's consolatory method as shameful. First, he asks rhetorically:

> [F]or what is more shameful than to hunt after pleasures when you're in mourning - or rather by means of mourning - and to look for something pleasing even when you are in tears? […] What do you mean, Metrodorus, when you say that we should mix pleasure with our pain? That's how we console little boys with a cookie, that's how we pacify infant's cries with milk. Are you not going to allow your pleasure to hold back even when your son's body is on the pyre or when your friend is dying? Do you want to tickle your grief with pleasure even then?[128].

Seneca suggests that such remedies are revolting, unfit and unseemly and cannot be applied "without loss to one's self-respect[129]. In other paragraphs too, he repeatedly uses similarly tendentious adjectives such as ungrateful, stupid, mad and shameful to disqualify certain beliefs or forms of behavior and cast them as shameful and best avoided[130]. After this general

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[126] *Ep.* 99.26: "I have no doubt what your feelings will be in these matters". Cf *Ep.* 13.14, in which Seneca tell Lucilius, a propos of his recommendation to counter fear with hope, if he cannot face it directly, that "I am ashamed to speak with you in this fashion and to revive you with such light remedies".

[127] Cf. *supra,* p. 61.

[128] *Ep.* 99.26-27: *Quid enim est turpius quam captare in ipso luctu voluptatem, immo per luctum, et inter lacrimas quoque quod iuvet quaerere? […] Quid, tu dicis miscendam ipsi dolori voluptatem? Sic consolamur crustulo pueros, sic infantium fletum infuso lacte conpescimus.*

[129] *Ep.* 99.29: *Quaedam remedia aliis partibus corporis salutaria velut foeda et indecora adhiberi aliis nequeunt, et quod aliubi prodesset sine damno verecundiae, id fit inhonestum loco vulneris: non te pudet luctum voluptate sanare? Severius ista plaga curanda est*

[130] *Ep.*99.4: *ingratus*, §6 and 18: *stultus*, §7: *demens,* §26: *turpis* Cf. *Ep.* 63.12, in which waiting for grief to end of its own accord is described as shameful (*turpissimum)*. With this set of demeaning descriptors, Seneca appeals to the *pudor*-script Kaster has termed "*pudor* a discreditable lowering of the self". This script "comprises any behavior, or any state produced by my own behavior, that is regarded as merely humiliating in itself" and is often associated with a particular set of terms of condemnation that includes ugly, low, unworthy and filthy (Kaster 2005:47-8)

condemnation, Seneca directly apostrophizes Metrodorus: "Are you not ashamed to cure sorrow by pleasure"[131]. Although the rhetorical question is addressed to Metrodorus, its real target is clearly Marullus himself[132]. Without rebuking him directly, Seneca's vehement criticism of Metrodorus' approach clearly indicates that it would be shameful for Marullus himself to resort to such soft Epicurean remedies. Instead, Seneca urges him to accept the conclusion that "this sore spot must be treated in a more drastic way", that is, Seneca's own severe admonitory approach. Marullus, in other words, can only avoid further shameful behavior by facing his current shameful behavior, abandoning it, and returning to his old self. By representing remedies for grief other than his own as shameful, Seneca makes it difficult for his addressees to reject his help, as doing so would mean willfully exposing themselves to *pudor*. Seneca, in other words, justifies his approach by means of the carrot and the stick: first, he tells them that, given the seriousness of their condition, only his severe remedy will allow them to fully recover. In addition, however, he tells them that refusing to accept his remedies would put them in an even more shameful position than they are already in.

2.3.5. Shame and Duty

Another closely related way in which Seneca appeals to Kaster's script of "*pudor* as discreditable

[131] *Ep. 99.29: Non te pudet luctum voluptate sanare?* Cf. *infra,* pp. 175-6, on Caligula's shameful coping strategies.

[132] Marcus Wilson, in written communication (January 2008), suggests that "as the reference to *voluptas* indicates, Marullus is treated as specifically an Epicurean". Seneca reveals that he has been reading Metrodorus' consolatory letter to his sister (98.9). Letter 99 seeks to reject (at least in part) the Epicurean approach to consolation. It is not a genuine *consolatio* but a commentary on Metrodorus' consolation, couched in the form of a fictional letter to a (probably fictional) Marullus".

retraction of the self" is by showing his addressees that they are failing in their professional or family duties as a result of their grief. Seneca wants to show his addressees that they neglect their social obligations in the present through their uselessly prolonged and ultimately pointless attention for the deceased[133]. In doing so, he aims to attack the belief that their grief is a fitting expression of piety towards the deceased, by showing that in fact, it leads to a lack of *pietas* towards the living. This approach is clearly inspired by Chrysippus, who argued that a philosopher should begin by attacking his interlocutor's beliefs about the appropriateness of grief, rather than immediately going for the Stoic argument that their loss is ultimately insignificant.

In the consolation to Polybius, Seneca takes Polybius to task for neglecting his surviving brothers through his consuming devotion for his deceased brother: "You should be both a comfort and a consoler to them; but you won't be able to resist their grief if you're indulging in your own"[134]. Seneca reminds Polybius that his deceased brother would not wish him to suffer and withdraw from social interaction, as grief does not help the deceased and should not be seen as a moral duty for the mourner. Further on, he confronts Polybius with a rhetorical question: are you grieving on your own account, or on account of the deceased? If he is grieving for his deceased brother, his grief is pointless, as his brother no longer feels any pain. If he is grieving for himself, he is selfish and deficient in *pietas*[135]. His duty towards his living brothers, in Seneca's judgment, would even justify a deceitful concealment of his grief, if necessary[136].

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[133] Johann (1968,191-204) discusses this consolatory *topos.*

[134] *Ad Pol.* V.5: *Et solacium debes esse illorum et consolator; non poteris autem horum maerori obstare, si tuo indulseris.*

[135] Cf. *Ad Marc* XII.1 in which Seneca similarly asks if her sorrow is "for her own ills or the ills of the deceased". The consolation to Helvia contains similar injunctions not to withdraw into a self-absorbed grief, and to remain mindful of her other sons, her grandchildren and her father, and her duties towards them, instead of pining over Seneca's own banishment to the neglect of the ones that really need her attention (XVIII).

[136] *Ad Pol.* V.5: *Indue dissimilem animo tuo vultum et, si potes, proice omnem ex toto dolorem, si minus, introrsus abde et contine, ne appareat, et da operam ut fratres tui te imitentur, qui honestum putabunt quodcumque te facientem viderint, animumque ex vultu tuo sument.*

Seneca's argument that his addressees should suppress their own feelings in order to fulfill their family duties might at first sight seem entirely unphilosophical, appealing to traditional Roman values rather than Stoic ones. This argument, however, which underlies Wilson's claim that Seneca's consolatory approach appeals exclusively to traditional social values relies on a mistaken binary between traditional and philosophical concerns regarding family relations. Reydams-Schils has convincingly argued against the common view that the Roman Stoics' aim was a form of emotional isolation, and has shown how they prized and defended traditional modes of sociability, in particular family bonds[137]. Margaret Graver, on the other hand, has rightly pointed out that the Stoics' strong position on social duties necessarily flows from their analysis of the emotions in terms of judgments, which entails a full responsibility for all actions that flow from one's judgments[138].

This emphasis on moral responsibility indicates that Seneca's concern is not just with how his addressees' behavior affects the interests of his social surroundings, but perhaps primarily with how it affects their moral agency, a key notion in his works[139]. This is particularly clear in the *Consolation to Marcia*, in which Seneca points out that her grief not only makes her neglect her family duties, but, even more importantly, makes her betray her moral character. After confronting Marcia with two different ways of coping with grief, responsible restraint and selfish indulgence, he concludes with the following injunction: "You will demonstrate in this situation too that uprightness and self-respect that you have maintained all your life"[140]. This comment makes clear that was is at stake in this "discreditable retraction of the self" is not just Marcia's neglect of her

[137] Reydams-Schils (2005)
[138] Graver (2007:4)
[139] Cf. Inwood (2005:302-21).
[140] *Ad Marc.* III.4: *Quam in omni vita servasti morum probitatem et verecundiam, in hac quoque re praestabis.*

social duties, but her betrayal of her own self-respect (*verecundia*)[141].

3. Towards Stoicism

To conclude this chapter, I will show how Seneca transitions from propaedeutic admonition to consolatory argumentation by subtly undercutting his addressees' conventional values and pointing the way towards a more Stoic understanding of the grief and loss. He does so both through his exempla, which often exhibit a moral strength that embodies the Stoic ideal of *apatheia*, and through his dialogues with in imaginary interlocutor ("someone might say…") who voices conventional beliefs and values that Seneca contradicts, offering Stoic values in their stead.

By arguing that Seneca gradually moves from preliminary arguments that target his addressees' conventional views towards properly Stoic arguments, I aim to show, *pace* Wilson and others, that Seneca is not merely a pragmatic, eclectic 'spiritual director' but a Stoic who, even if he doesn't aim to convert his addressees to Stoicism by the end of the consolation, increasingly nudges them towards Stoic beliefs. This, I claim, is consonant with Chrysippus approach, which encourages the introduction of properly Stoic arguments after the "inflammation of the emotions" has abated.

Just like Chrysippus, Seneca aims to bring in properly Stoic argument after this preliminary remedy has succeeded in "reducing the inflammation" of his interlocutors' emotions. He does so by redefining their commitments as already leading towards a Stoic understanding. As Roller puts

[141] Epictetus's work too shows a strong consciousness of the relation between moral agency and *aidôs* (Cooper 2005:201).

it, Seneca often "chooses to present the evaluative structures of Stoic ethics […] in terms of the 'commonsense' evaluative structures of traditional Roman ethics"[142]. He "appeals to the kinds of ethical views most people have about the world, and so, taking common conceptions as his starting point, helps his ultimately Stoic argument to 'get off the ground'" [143]. For reasons of brevity, I will discuss only the *Consolation to Marcia* as a case study of how Seneca gradually introduces Stoic material, after first clearing the ground through propaedeutic admonition.

After the introductory sections discussed above, in which Seneca appeals to Marcia's *pudor*, he proceeds in a dialogical fashion, refuting a series of objections, based on *conventional* Roman values, which Marcia might bring up against his arguments[144]. This rhetorical and compositional strategy, which Seneca uses in nearly all of his philosophical works, serves as a way of structuring his arguments around the conventional Roman beliefs he wants to reject, replacing them with Stoic ones instead. The first objection he expects Marcia to bring up is that "it is natural to mourn for our loved ones". "Who denies this", Seneca responds, "as long as it is done in moderation?" At first, this may seem to be a concession to the ideal of *metriopatheia*, the Platonic and Aristotelean goal of moderating the emotions rather than eradicating them, as the Stoics proposed[145]. The way Seneca defines moderation however, comes much closer to the Stoic ideal of *apatheia* than to what Marcia, or for that matter a Platonist or Aristotelean, might envision.

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[142] Roller (2001:87)

[143] This strategy of stripping traditional Roman values and conceptions of their received meanings and redefining them in terms consistent with a Stoic point of view is a common Senecan ploy. Cf. Robert Newman (1988) on *gloria*, Matthew Roller'(2001: 64-126, esp. 88-126) on exemplarity, Shadi Bartsch (2006, esp. ch. 3-5) on Roman 'scopic paradigms', Gareth Williams (2006) on exile, Elizabeth Asmis (2009) on Fortuna and Catharine Edwards (2009) on slavery.

[144] Marcia's anticipated objections occur in VII.1, IX.1, XII.3, XVI.1, XVII.1, XIX.3, XX.1

[145] As, for example, Grollios (1956:66) and Boal (1973:50) suggest. Cf. Sauer (2013:168, 172), who rightly argues that Seneca's apparent flexibility in enforcing the ideal of *apatheia* reveals "not so much an alteration of the author's fundamental principles but rather their adaptation to the addressee".

He notes that he will not "direct your thoughts to instructions of the sterner sort, so that I tell you to endure your human lot in inhuman fashion, so that I dry a mother's tears on the very day she buries her son". But in the series of *exempla* that immediately follows, he holds up models to her of men and women who barely allowed grief to distract them for more than a moment. Consider the *exemplum* of Pulvillus, a Roman general who hardly even flinched when he heard the news of his son's death:

> Pulvillus was informed of his son's death when he was dedicating the temple on the Capitoline and was still grasping the doorpost. But he pretended not to have heard the news and repeated the words of the priestly ritual, Not a single moan interrupted the course of his Prayer, and he entreated the favor of Jupiter with the name of his son ringing in his ears. […] The same man, however, when he returned home, had eyes filled with tears and uttered a few tearful words, but after completing the rites that custom prescribed for the dead, the expression he had worn at the Capitol returned.

Similarly, Seneca writes that the emperor Tiberius delivered the funeral oration for his own son and "kept his features unchanged as the Roman people gave way to tears; to Sejanus, who was standing at his side, he presented an example of how patiently he could bear the loss of his loved ones"[146]. The self-control Seneca advocates in this list of *exempla*, which further includes Sulla, Bibulus, Iulius Caesar and Augustus, can hardly be distinguished from the *apatheia* associated with the Stoic *sapiens*. Notwithstanding his protestation that he is not advocating inhuman restraint, the grief Seneca admits is at most minimal.

Anticipating Marcia's criticism that all the examples he cites are men, he proceeds to discuss similar examples of women, in order to show that the capacity for such exceptional restraint is not restricted to Roman generals. Of Cornelia, the mother of the Gracchi, he writes that she responded to those who sought to comfort her and calling her unfortunate, by saying: "I will never

[146] *Ad Marciam* 15.3: *Ti. Caesar et quem genuerat et quem adoptauerat amisit; ipse tamen pro rostris laudavit filium stetitque in conspectu posito corpore, interiecto tantummodo velamento quod pontificis oculos a funere arceret, et flente populo Romano non flexit vultum; experiendum se dedit Seiano ad latus stanti quam patienter posset suos perdere.*

call myself any less than fortunate, I who gave birth to the Gracchi"[147]. Cornelia's answer, with its implication that losing externals, even if they are family members, does not constitute real misfortune, is uncompromisingly Stoic.

At first sight, the two sets of *exempla* in the *Consolation to Marcia* may seem to be redundant, and scholars such as Charles Favez have judged the apparent repetitiveness to be a compositional defect[148]. But as we have seen, the two lists in fact fulfill different functions: in the first set, Seneca appeals to Marcia's admiration for her friend Livia, and her feelings of *pudor* at being associated with Octavia's behavior in order to restrain her grief. In the second set, he enumerates historical figures who have born their grief heroically, in a way that might win approval from even the strictest Stoic censor. This movement from less demanding, conventional values to stricter Stoic values are paralleled in several other Senecan works[149]. The way Seneca introduces increasingly Stoic content is deliberately gradual, so as not to alienate Marcia by coming across as preachy or out of touch with the realities of her experience. Still, it is clear that his pedagogical approach in the *Consolation* is informed by his own Stoic beliefs and firmly based on Stoic therapeutic principles.

4. Conclusion

[147] *Ad Marciam* 16.4: *Consolantibus tamen miseramque dicentibus 'numquam' inquit 'non felicem me dicam, quae Gracchos peperi.'*

[148] As Karl Abel (1967:22) has pointed out, this movement from conventional values to philosophical is reflected in the dual division of this work, with its seeming repetitiveness. In the first part, he exhorts Marcia merely towards a moderation of her grief or *metriopatheia*, and offers *exempla* and *praecepta* in support of this goal. But in the second part, he moves towards the stricter Stoic goal of *apatheia,* which he again supports with *exempla* and *praecepta.*

[149] For example, C.E. Manning (1981:73) has pointed out that his *De Providentia* contains three successive discussions of suicide (2.9-12; 3.14; 6.7-9), with increasingly Stoic arguments in each of them. Similarly Martha Nussbaum (1994:408) has shown that in the *De Ira* "the Stoic material is introduced gently, gradually, and also minimally, in a way that maximizes the terrain of agreement between Seneca and his interlocutor, and draws the interlocutor into the process of therapy without asking him first to give up any cherished goal".

In this chapter, I analyzed the rhetorical and social aspects of Seneca's shaming criticism by offering a thematic reading of his *Consolations,* in which – perhaps surprisingly to a modern reader – shame-appeals abound. The main conclusion of this extended case-study is that Seneca's moral rhetoric heavily relies on what Kaster has called has called the *pudor*-script of "discreditable retraction of the self". In various, interrelated ways, Seneca challenges his addressees to overcome their grief by showing that their grief is inappropriate for someone of their reputation, stature, social role, or gender. But rather than merely reinforcing his addressees' traditional beliefs about honor, Seneca gently nudges them towards a Stoic point of view by emphasizing the fact that their grief gets in the way of their own moral agency. As we have seen, he does so not only by refuting his addressee's objections against his consolatory arguments, but also by presenting a set of *exempla,* who, while not themselves Stoics, exhibit an emotional restraint that is hard to distinguish from that of Stoic sages. The way Seneca introduces increasingly Stoic content is deliberately gradual, in order to preventing alienating his addressees by coming across as preachy or lacking empathy. Still, his therapeutic approach is clearly informed by his own Stoic beliefs and ambitions and firmly based on Stoic pedagogical principles.

Seneca's *Consolations*, in sum, are hardly devoid of Stoic content, as Marcus Wilson has argued. Nor do they merely resort to an eclectic set of philosophical arguments, cherry-picked from different philosophical traditions. Rather, his therapeutic strategy is firmly based on Chrysippus' two-step approach. At first, he works from within his addressees' beliefs and values and instills a painful awareness in them that they are not living up to their own moral standards. When he urges Polybius to consider the *magna persona* with which he has been endowed or when he exhorts *Marcia* not to act shamefully out of character, he encourages them to think not so much

about the threat to their reputation as about the threat to their own self-conception as self-controlled and resilient individuals.

Chapter 4: Moral Elevation and the Seeds of the Virtues

In the previous two chapters, we have seen how Seneca aims to elicit shame in order to restrain his addressees' misguided behavior and nudge them towards a Stoic point of view. In this chapter and the next, I wish to turn towards other forms of admonition that that aim to elicit more pleasant moral emotions such as enthusiasm, joy and admiration. As we noted earlier, Seneca believes that *proficientes* can benefit not only from severe criticism (*castigatio, obiurgatio*) that restrains them from indulging in vices but also from exhortation (*exhortatio, adhortatio*) that urges them to the pursuit of wisdom[1].

In several of his *Letters*, in fact, Seneca emphasizes that exhortation does not merely tell the *proficiens* what to do, but aims to instill an ardent motivation to do what is right. In *Letter* 95, for example, he argues that the first foundation of the philosophical life consists in making the aspiring philosopher feel a kind of love and religious devotion towards virtue, which he compares with the reverence and love soldiers feel for their battle standards[2]. Exhortation, he writes elsewhere, should help *proficientes* "fall deeply in love with virtue" and strengthen their commitment to the pursuit of philosophy.[3]

In *Letters* 94 and 108, Seneca even endorses a form of moral rhetoric based on inspiring *sententiae* that aims to elicit such feelings of ardent enthusiasm for the pursuit of the moral good.

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1 *Supra*, p. 27.

2 *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 iusiurandum 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.*

3 `*Ep.* 71.5: "if you convince yourself of this [that the only good is what is honorable] and fall deeply in love (*adamaveris*) with virtue (just loving it is not enough), then whatever befalls because of virtue will bring good fortune and happiness to you". In *Ep.* 89.4, Seneca even defines philosophy as a *sapientiae amor et adfectatio*.

The vocabulary of emotion and inspiration in both *Letters* has led scholars to the belief that Seneca adopted ideas at odds with his commitment to an "orthodox" Chrysippean Stoicism and to the ideal of *apatheia*[4]. Albrecht Dihle and Aldo Setaioli, for example, claim that *Letter* 94 was influenced by the doctrines of Posidonius, who supposedly argued that admonition should affect the irrational part of the soul[5] Others, such as Giancarlo Mazzoli and Alessandro Schiesaro, have argued that Seneca's discussion of rousing philosophical speeches in *Letter* 108 as well as the soaring conclusion of the *De Tranquillitate,* are indebted to a conception of irrational sublimity inspired by Democritus, Plato and Aristotle.[6]

In this chapter, I will contest this reading and offer a different interpretation of Seneca's approach to moral exhortation. After briefly discussing the tradition of philosophical exhortation and Seneca's arguments for its necessity, I will offer a new reading of key passages that have been cited in support of claims about Seneca's supposedly "unorthodox" approach to exhortation and show that the emotion Seneca refers to in *Letters* 94 and 108 is not an ordinary emotion (*pathos)* but a kind of rational "elevation", emanating from our inborn attraction towards the good[7]. By invoking the Stoic concept that all human beings are born with "seeds of the virtues" implanted in them, Seneca offers a theoretical justification for this elevation that is based on accepted Stoic

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4 On the notion of a Stoic orthodoxy, cf. *supra,* p. 18.

5 Dihle (1973), Setaioli (2001:127-139. For a fuller discussion of Dihle's argument, cf. *supra,* pp. 52-3. Aldo Setaioli (2001:120-155) charts gradual evolution in Stoic thinking about the usefulness of rhetoric and emotional appeals and argues that Diogenes of Babylon, Panaetius and Posidonius, influenced by Platonic and Aristotelean precedents, increasingly recognized the necessity of types of admonition that aimed not just at convincing reason but at obtaining an emotional loyalty (2001:142: adesione sentimentale) to the program of moral education they outlined.

6 Mazzoli (1970:46-59, 1990, 1991),Schiesaro (2003:21-25). Similar arguments are found in Grilli 1953 (123, 246 ff.), Guillemin (1954:270), Berger (1960:364 and *passim*), Motto & Clark (1993:189).

7 I borrow Algoe & Haidt's concept of 'elevation' (2009) to refer to the emotional responses to moral exemplars and other representations of moral goodness, for which no common term exists in English. As they describe it: "elevation is elicited by acts of charity, gratitude, fidelity, generosity or any other strong display of virtue. It leads to distinctive physical feelings: a feeling of 'dilation' or opening in the chest, combined with the feeling that one has been uplifted or 'elevated' in some way. It gives rise to a specific motivation or action tendency: emulation, the desire 'of doing charitable and grateful acts also' (Algoe & Haidt 2009:106).

principles. In addition to showing that Seneca's approach is based on a Stoic moral psychology, I will address the criticism of scholars such as John Cooper that Seneca privileges moral rhetoric at the expense of promoting theoretical understanding. As I will show, Seneca clearly states that the feelings of moral elevation aroused by a philosophical rhetoric are only beneficial if the truths that elicited it are thoroughly assimilated and understood on a theoretical level[8]. Thus, rather than merely importing concepts and theories that are at odds with his philosophical commitments, Seneca offers an argument for the usefulness of exhortation and admonition that draws upon recognizably Stoic resources and incorporates them within a Stoic program of philosophical education that emphasizes rational comprehension.

1. Exhortation in the Philosophical Tradition

The exact meaning of the term exhortation, and its relationship to related notions such as *paraenesis* and *protreptic*, is a hotly debated topic[9]. Scholarly efforts to offer exact definitions of the ancient terms, however, overlooks both their different usages of the terms in ancient authors and the fluidity between exhortation, supposedly addressed to insiders and protreptic, supposedly meant to convert outsiders[10]. What is clear, however, is that the Stoics considered protreptic and exhortation to be key elements of a philosophical education. Most major Stoics, including Cleanthes, Chrysippus, Posidonius and authored protreptics, though barely any fragments or even

8 *Ep.* 94.46-47, 108.9-12, cf. *infra,* pp. 146-149.

9 Cf. *supra*, pp 21-22.

10 Slings (1995, 188), Engberg-Pedersen (2004), Swancutt (2004, *passim*) and Tite (2009:118, 124). Seneca's own terminology is hardly consistent. In two of his letters, distinguishes between exhortation, a forceful encouragement to adopt philosophical values, and admonition, which reminds individuals of values they already accept (*Ep.* 13.5, 47.21). In other texts, however, he regularly conflates the two. In *Ep.* 94.25, e.g., he writes that reminding is, in fact, a sort of exhortation, whereas in §39, he states that exhortation, consolation, scolding and other psychagogic practices are all forms of admonition (*monitionum genera*); in §37 he even suggests that precepts are a form of exhortation (*praecepta in officium adhortantur*).

testimonies are extant.[11] Seneca too composed a work entitled *Exhortationes*, of which fragments are preserved in Lactantius[12]. Apart from writing such specifically protreptic or hortatory works, the Stoics believed that exhortation was an important aspect of philosophical teaching or writing[13]. Aristo of Chios, a dissident student of Zeno of Citium, famously dismissed the hortatory part of ethics, but this very rejection implies that Zeno himself instituted it as a key component of his pedagogical theory[14].

Notwithstanding the early Stoics' well-attested interest in exhortation, ancient critics vehemently denounced them for their neglect rhetorical persuasiveness. Cicero, for example, writes that "Zeno and his successors were either unable or unwilling to cover" this part of philosophy and sarcastically notes that Cleanthes' and Chrysippus treatises on rhetoric are "a complete manual for anyone whose ambition is to hold his tongue"[15]. The Stoics' neglect of persuasion, he writes, is particularly problematic since their positions are often so bold and counter-intuitive as to require extensive persuasion. As he puts it in *On Ends:*

> "You see the how daunting the Stoic's task is, to convince an inhabitant of Circeii that the whole vast world is his own hometown? What? A Stoic rouse enthusiasm? He is much more likely to extinguish any enthusiasm the student may have had to begin with."[16]

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[11] Cleanthes: *D.L.* 174, Aristo: *D.L.* 7.163, Chrysippus: Plut. *De Stoic. Repug*. 17, Posidonius: Sen. *Ep.* 90; for a general discussion, cf. Jordan (1986: 311).

[12] Lact. *Div. Inst*. III.15, on which cf. Lausberg (1970:53-152). According to Mazzoli's analysis (1977), the goal of the work was to exhort the reader to let his judgment in all matters be guided by philosophy and to voluntarily consent to God's providential plan.

[13] See Byers (2013:27).

[14] Cf. Sextus Empiricus, *Against the Logicians* I.12. Aristo, however, was an outlier within the Stoic school and had no real followers, and his position is in many ways closer to Cynicism than to mainstream Stoicism. On this, cf. Porter (2000).

[15] Cic. *Fin.* IV.3.7: *Totum genus hoc Zeno et qui ab eo sunt aut non potuerunt aut noluerunt, certe reliquerunt. Quamquam scripsit artem rhetoricam Cleanthes, Chrysippus etiam, sed sic, ut, si quis obmutescere concupierit, nihil aliud legere debeat.*

[16] Cic. *Fin.* IV.3.7: *Quantam rem agas, ut Circeiis qui habitet totum hunc mundum suum municipium esse existimet? Quid? Ille incendat? Restinguet citius, si ardentem acceperit.*

In his *Paradoxes of the Stoics,* Cicero similarly argues that the Stoic school "does not pursue any flowery speech or extended argument" but "proves a proposition by minute little syllogisms, like pinpricks"[17]. Perhaps surprisingly, in light of his oft-articulated respect for the founders of the school, Seneca echoes this criticism when he faults Chrysippus – perhaps somewhat unfairly – for his "overly subtle sharpness" (and for being Greek)[18]. "Even when he seems to be getting something done", Seneca argues, Chrysippus "delivers a pinprick rather than a piercing blow"[19].

In *Letter* 82, he similarly mocks Zeno of Citium, the founder of the Stoic school, for his excessive reliance on syllogisms, which may succeed in forcing our judgment (*inponere)* but not in winning conviction[20]. By way of illustration, he cites Zeno's syllogism "No evil is a source of glory, but death is a source of glory, therefore death is no evil"[21]. Such abstract truths, he argues, are useless and ineffective in real-life situations[22]. To show the absurdity of this approach, Seneca apostrophizes Zeno and asks him whether he would have relied on this syllogism to exhort the three hundred Spartans at Thermopylae. "What an effective speech!" he exclaims. "After that who will hesitate to impale himself on the hostile blades and to die holding his ground?"[23] In contrast to the ineffectiveness of Zeno's abstract logic, he approvingly cites the wry *sententia* Leonidas used to exhort his men: "Fellow soldiers, lunch as if you were going to dine with the dead!"[24]. In *Letter* 64, Seneca similarly contrasts the inspiring writings of the philosopher Sextius with the

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[17] Cic, *Par. Stoic.* Pr. 2.1: *quae nullum sequitur florem orationis neque dilatat argumentum, minutis interrogatiunculis quasi punctis, quod proposuit, efficit.*

[18] Cf. *supra,* pp. 39-40*,* where I show that the ancient sources on Chrysippus' rhetoric contradict each other. Seneca's emphasis on Chrysippus' Greekness seems designed to curry the favor of chauvinistic Roman audiences.

[19] *Ben* I.4.1: *Tu modo nos tuere, si quis mihi obiciet, quod Chrysippum in ordinem coegerim, magnum mehercules virum, sed tamen Graecum, cuius acumen nimis tenue retunditur et in se saepe replicatur; etiam cum agere aliquid videtur, pungit, non perforat.* Seneca's criticism here, one may speculate, is that Chrysippus doesn't always act upon his own realization (discussed *supra*) that individuals caught up in emotional reasoning do not tend to respond well to overly subtle forms of reasoning.

[20] *Ep.* 82.20: *Haec ipsa quae involvuntur ab illis solvere malim et expandere, ut persuadeam, non ut inponam.*

[21] *Ep.* 82.21 : *Dices 'quod malum est gloriosum non est; mors gloriosa est; mors ergo non malum'?*

[22] *Ep.* 82.24: *Acuta sunt ista quae dicis: nihil est acutius arista; quaedam inutilia et inefficacia ipsa subtilitas reddit.*

[23] *Ep.* 64 .21: *O efficacem contionem! Quis post hanc dubitet se infestis ingerere mucronibus et stans mori?*

[24] *Ep.* 64 .21: *Sic', inquit 'conmilitones, prandete tamquam apud inferos cenaturi.'*

bloodless tracts of philosophers who "instruct, argue, and quibble, but don't rouse the spirit because they don't have any themselves"[25]. He describes the effect of Sextius' writing as follows:

> When you will have read Sextius you will say: 'He is alive, he is strong, he is free, he is beyond human and he sends me away full of immense confidence. I will admit to you the frame of mind I am in when I read him: I want to leave no stone unturned, I want to shout out: 'Fortune, why are you holding back? Attack me: you will find me prepared.' I take on the state of mind of a man seeking out opportunity to challenge himself and display his virtue. [26].

The reason why Sextius' writings are so powerful, Seneca explains, is that "he will show you the grandeur of a blessed life without making you despair of attaining it: you will know it is elevated but attainable to the man who desires it"[27]. The effectiveness of Sextius' writings then, lies in his ability to show (*ostendere*) the virtuous life in vivid colors and thereby to strengthen our eagerness to attain it.

2. Exhortation and Emotion

As we discussed in chapter 1, Seneca's emphasis that a philosopher needs to *show*, rather than merely explain the truth, does not mean he departs from Stoic prescriptions on the uses of rhetoric, as scholars have often asserted. In a number of passages, however, he seems to go further than previous Stoics by asserting that vivid moral maxims or speeches not only activate a person's knowledge, but also elicit emotional responses in the process[28]. In *Letter* 94, for example, Seneca

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[25] *Ep.* 64 .21: *Instituunt, disputant, cavillantur, non faciunt animum quia non habent.* Sextius was the founder of a short-lived school of philosophy that appears to have been closely aligned with Stoicism in its ethical orientation, even as it borrowed elements from the Platonic and Pythagorean tradition (cf. Hadot 2007).

[26] *Ep.* 64 .4: *Cum legeris Sextium, dices, 'vivit, viget, liber est, 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….*

[27] *Ep.* 64.5: *Nam hoc quoque egregium Sextius habet, quod et ostendet tibi beatae vitae magnitudinem et desperationem eius non faciet: scies esse illam in excelso, sed volenti penetrabilem*

[28] Cf. *Ep.* 94.25-6, cited on pp. 29-30.

argues that hallowed moral *sententiae* not only exhort us to virtuous behavior, but also "touch our very emotions". After citing a number of examples of such effective maxims, such as "the remedy for insults is forgetting them" and "Fortune favors the bold, but the lazy man stands in his own way" he writes:

> Such maxims need no special pleader; they touch our very emotions and help us simply because Nature is exercising her proper function. The soul carries within itself the seeds of everything that is honorable and these seeds are stirred to growth by advice as a spark that is fanned by a gentle breeze develops its natural fire. Virtue is aroused when it is touched and impelled.[29] […] Who will deny that even the most ignorant individuals are effectively struck by such precepts? Take, for example, the following sayings, very brief but packing a lot of punch: "Nothing in excess", "The greedy mind is not satisfied with any gain", "Expect to be treated by another as you treat him". We hear such sayings with a certain shock, and no one can doubt them or ask 'why?'; so strongly in fact, does the truth command us, even without explanation.[30]

The metaphor of seeds and sparks is common in Stoic texts, and refers to the *aphormai*, or starting-points of the virtues[31]. As we saw in chapter 1, this concept of inborn starting-points of the virtues formed the theoretical basis for the Stoic belief that humans had the capacity to attain wisdom[32]. Likewise, the notion that certain impressions are self-evidently convincing is a familiar point in Stoic epistemology[33]. Notwithstanding this invocation of such Stoic concepts, Seneca's claim that

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[29] *Ep* 94.28-9: *Advocatum ista non quaerunt: adfectus ipsos tangunt et natura vim suam exercente proficiunt. Omnium honestarum rerum semina animi gerunt, quae admonitione excitantur non aliter quam scintilla flatu levi adiuta ignem suum explicat; erigitur virtus cum tacta est et inpulsa.*

[30] *Ep.* 94.43: *Quis autem negabit feriri quibusdam praeceptis efficaciter etiam inperitissimos? velut his brevissimis vocibus, sed multum habentibus ponderis: « Nil nimis », « Avarus animus nullo satiatur lucro », « Ab alio expectes alteri quod feceris ». Haec cum ictu quodam audimus, nec ulli licet dubitare aut interrogare 'quare?' adeo etiam sine ratione ipsa veritas lucet.*

[31] Cic. *Tusc*. III.2, Cic. *Fin* V.18, V.43. As Graver (2002:77) notes, the metaphors are well chosen: "sparks" suggest the Stoic designing fire (Cf. Sen. *De Ot.* V.5), seeds the seminal principles.

[32] Diogenes Laertius (VII.89) writes that Zeno argued that Nature has given us "pure starting-points" (ἀφορμὰς ἀδιαστρόφους) and Stobaeus reports that "according to Cleanthes all people have from nature starting points toward virtue. They are like half- lines of poetry, as it were: worthless when incomplete, but worthwhile [or righteous, *spoudaioi*] when completed." (Stob. *Ecl.* 2.65.8 = SVF I.566 = LS61L, translation Graver (2007:246n11).

[33] Seneca's claim that the moral *sententiae* he cites "need no special pleader", bring about a shock and impress even the most uneducated individuals without permitting any doubt or questioning all but verbally echoes Stoic descriptions of kataleptic impressions. Cf. *Ep. Ep.* 94.28 (*inpulsa)* and 94.43 (*ictus*) with Cf. Sextus Empirics *Adv. Math.* 7.257 (= LS4 0K3): [B]eing self-evident and striking (ἐναργὴς οὖσα καὶ πληκτικὴ), [the impression] all but seizes us by the hair [...] and pulls us to assent, needing nothing else to achieve this effect or to establish its difference from other impressions".

efficacious moral admonition simultaneously touches our emotions (his usual translation of the Greek *pathos*) *and* the seeds of the virtues within us, and that this process is both beneficial and natural, is striking, and appears to go against the basic tenets of Stoicism[34].

The argument that the truth encapsulated in moral *sententiae* "shines even without explanation" is, in fact, embedded within a perfectly Stoic, cognitivist argument for the usefulness of admonition[35]. In the paragraphs immediately preceding the quotation above, Seneca describes the effect of admonition in a way that emphasizes its impact on our memory and attention.[36] In the paragraph that follows, he adds that precepts help us to order thoughts that are scattered in our mind, "with the result that they are greatly increased in strength and uplift the soul to a greater extent.[37] Seneca's mention of the rousing effect of *admonitio* within this firmly intellectualist, Chrysippean analysis of the effect of admonition is a strong indication that this effect is not a form of irrational elevation, but rather a form of rational elevation.

Albrecht Dihle and Aldo Setaioli, in fact, recognize the "orthodox" elements in Seneca's argument for the usefulness of admonition and argue that he used both "orthodox", Chrysippean arguments and "unorthodox", Posidonian ones.[38] But even apart from the fact that the letter contains no clear references to an "unorthodox" moral psychology, this claim has the potentially puzzling implication that Seneca switches back and forth between arguments relying on conflicting moral psychologies without so much as indicating how they could be harmonized with each other[39].

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[34] The expression *adfectus tangunt* seems to imply that the *adfectus,* or at least the potential to feel them, is somehow already present in the soul and is simply aroused by *sententiae*. Cf. *Ep.*11.1, in which Seneca calls *verecundia 'infixum et ingenitum*').

[35] *Ep.* 94.43: *Etiam sine ratione ipsa veritas lucet.* Cf. Michel (1969:252), who notes that "elles [*sententiae*] écartent, par leur force et leur évidence, les obscurités et les préjuges, et elles rendent directement sensible ce qui est naturel".

[36] *Ep.* 94.25-6, discussed *supra*, p. 47.

[37] *Ep.* 94. 29: *ut plus valeant animumque magis adlevent.*

[38] Setaioli (2001:141n152 points out that Seneca often defend the 'intransigent intellectualism' of Chrysippus, without trying to explain the contradiction. Dihle (1973) parses Seneca's argument unfolds as follows: §23, 25-6: orthodox, §27-28: unorthodox, §31-4, 36: orthodox, §40-46: unorthodox, §47-49: orthodox, §50-1: unorthodox. For a fuller refutation of Dihle's argument, cf. the appendix to ch. 1.

[39] This conflict would simply disappear if we accept Christopher Gill's argument, discussed *supra,* in the notes on p.

A much better explanation for the apparent conflict between Seneca's different arguments is that the term *adfectus,* in this particular context, means something different than emotion according to the strict Stoic definition.[40] Such non-technical, colloquial employment of a technical, Stoic term is not at all unusual for Seneca, who regularly uses specific emotion terms such as *cupido* or *voluptas* to refer to virtuous desires.[41] Throughout his works, in fact, Seneca often mentions a rational feeling of elevation that strengthens the mind, which he contrasts with an irrational elevation that leads to emotional disorder. In *Letter* 76, for example, he writes:

> If every good is in the mind, then whatever strengthens, uplifts, and enlarges it is good: for virtue makes the mind stronger, more high-minded and more distinguished. Other things, however, spark our desires, weigh down the mind and make it unsteady; although they seem to raise it up they actually puff it up and mislead it with a great vanity.[42]

In another letter, Seneca similarly argues that good things "do not corrupt minds or provoke them: they raise them up and expand them but without causing a swelling".[43] In the *De Ira,* he explicitly dismisses the belief that emotions can bring about moral greatness. An enraged person, he argues, may *think* that he "radiates something lofty and sublime", but his condition is merely a "swelling" of the soul, without any solid foundation.[44] Though Mazzoli cites this argument, he fails to draw

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18, that the sharp distinction between psychological monism and dualism was not articulated until Plutarch, a generation after Seneca.

[40] Armisen-Marchetti (1989:46-52) and Staley (2010:63, 74-5, 94-5) have argued that Seneca aims to elicit only *propatheiai,* not full-blown emotions, and that this is perfectly justified in light of the Stoic ideal of *apatheia.* This claim, however, must be rejected. As Juliette Dross (2010: 153 n. 276) has pointed out, *propatheiai,* which have not yet been validated by assent, cannot stir up any meaningful *impetus* to action, which is precisely what Seneca aims to do. Dross believes that Armisen-Marchetti's interpretation might be saved if we accept Stevens' argument (2010) that Seneca recognizes a kind of preliminary impulses preceding our assent to impressions account. Dross herself, however, rightly admits that this interpretation is "fragile and acrobatic" (2010:155).

[41] *Voluptas*: *Ep.* 27.3, 59.2 (with Richardson-Hay 2006:184-5); *cupido/cupidtas*: *Ep.* 108.7 (*cupido recti, cf.* 108.12: *honesti rectique amorem*)*, Ben* III.1.4 (*honesta rei cupiditas*). On Seneca's 'sermo cotidianus', cf. Setaioli (1981 = 2000 ch. 1) and Williams (2003:30).

[42] *Ep.* 76.17: *Si omne in animo bonum est, quidquid illum confirmat, extollit, amplificat, bonum est; validiorem autem animum et excelsiorem et ampliorem facit virtus. Nam cetera quae cupiditates nostras inritant deprimunt quoque animum et labefaciunt et cum videntur attollere inflant ac multa vanitate deludunt.*

[43] *Ep.* 87.32: *non corrumpunt animos, non sollicitant; extollunt quidem et dilatant, sed sine tumore.*

[44] *De Ira* I.20.2: *Ne illud quidem iudicandum est, aliquid iram ad magnitudinem animi conferre. Non est enim illa magnitudo:tumor est; nec corporibus copia vitiosi umoris intentis morbus incrementum est sed pestilens abundantia. Omnes quos vecors animus supra cogitationes extollit humanas altum quiddam et sublime spirare se*

the logical conclusion that real sublimity, for Seneca, has nothing to do with the irrational and is associated with tranquility, freedom and greatness of soul, rather than with any irrational mindstates.[45]

Stephen Halliwell, in fact, has recently questioned the common assumption that the ancient notion of sublimity is fundamentally irrational. Halliwell persuasively argues that the Longinian notion of sublimity need not imply that the mind is forcefully altered by something external to it, but can be experienced as "a process which springs from within the mind's own internal structures and properties, including its cognitive capacities". From this point of view, the control sublimity exercises over the mind can be regarded "not as a mere imposition of mental force […] but as powerfully charged arousal and heightening of other minds' thoughts and feelings"[46].

This analysis closely resembles Seneca's argument in *Letter* 94 that admonition "engages our attention, rouses us and concentrates our memory".[47] Both Longinus and Seneca, in other words, claim that the powerful feelings brought about by inspiring words are not so much irrational emotions as rational feelings aroused by a sudden flash of understanding and insight. To stress this point, Seneca takes pains to distinguish between two conditions that may superficially look and feel similar, but are in fact each other's opposites. On the one hand, we have a rash emotional excitement that weakens the soul; on the other hand, we have an uplifting feeling of strength, faith and greatness of soul.[48] As Seneca writes in *Letter* 94:

> There are two things that give a lot of strength to the soul - trust in the truth and confidence; admonition brings about both. For belief is attached to it, and when it is believed, the soul receives great inspiration and is filled with confidence"[49]

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credunt; ceterum nil solidi subest, sed in ruinam prona sunt quae sine fundamentis crevere.

45 Mazzoli (1990 :93). Cf. *De Ira* I.21.4 and III.6.1, *Ep.* 88.2, *Vit. Beat*. IV.5 and IX.4.

46 Halliwell (2012:335, 340).

47 *Ep.* 94.25: *Non docet admonitio sed advertit, sed excitat, sed memoriam continet nec patitur elabi.* Cf. *supra*, p. 47.

48 Seneca's description of the effect of admonition as "filling up the soul" with *fiducia* and *fides* like refers to the distension (*eparsis*) of the soul associated with both emotions and *eupatheiai*.

49 *Ep.* 94.46: *Duae res plurimum roboris animo dant, fides veri et fiducia: utramque admonitio facit. Nam et creditur*

Both greatness of soul and confidence occur in Stoic classifications of the virtues as sub-forms of courage and Seneca frequently lists them together among the most important outward characteristics of wisdom.[50] But even though he notes that only Stoic sages possess perfect, unshaken *magnitudo animi* and *fiducia*, he argues that all human beings have the capacity to attain them and repeatedly notes that they can be cultivated through admonition, reading and diligent effort. In *Letter* 64, for example, he writes that his reading of Sextius has left him "full of immense confidence" and notes that he has "taken on his state of mind".[51] Similarly, he urges Lucilius to put his *fiducia sui* to the test and urges him to muster a "spirit of confidence and a mind strongly resolved to endure all things[52]

Seneca's notion of moral elevation, then, is not a form of irrational ecstasy, as scholars have often suggested, but a fundamentally rational feeling of elevation, which manifests itself in feelings of greatness of soul, faith and strength. As he writes in *Letter* 23, "it is hard to keep moderation in a matter which you consider good; a keen desire for the real good is safe"[53]. Even though he somewhat misleadingly refers to this feeling as an *adfectus* and rather hyperbolically

illi et, cum creditum est, magnos animus spiritus concipit ac fiducia impletur.

[50] E.g. *Ep.* 13.1; 64.3; 87.31, 35; 94.46; 104.22; 111.12, *De Const.* II.10.3, *De Ira* I.20. Cf. Roskam (2005:72-73). *Magnitudo animi* and its cognates are clearly translations of the Greek *megalopsychia,* which the early Stoics regarded as a form of courage (*Diog. Laert*. VII.92f, 128) and which Panaetius elevated to the rank of the cardinal virtues (Dyck 1981). On the important position of *magnitudo animi* in Seneca, cf. Hachmann (1995: 284-313). *Pace* Kidd (1988:632), there is no good reason why *fiducia* cannot be Seneca's translation of *tharraleotes*, the tendency to feel *tharros* (*SVF* III.264, 269), as Gauthier (1951:143) suggests. *Fiducia* occurs, along with *magnitudo animi*, in a quotation of Posidonius in *Ep.* 87.35. Kidd (1985:14-15, 1988:631-2) unconvincingly suggests that Seneca "tempered with or freely translated" Posidonius' syllogism, even though he acknowledges that the other terms Seneca uses in his discussion are all Latin equivalents of Greek Stoic terms. On the position of confidence in Stoic thought, cf. Graver (2007:213-221).

[51] *Ep.* 64.3: *Dimittit me plenum ingentis fiduciae* […] *Illius animum induo.* Cf. *supra,* pp. 134-135.

[52] *Ep.* 13.1; *Ep.* 98.1: *In hoc ipsum tibi plurimum conferet fiducia et ad tolerandum omne obfirmata mens*..Cf. *Ep.* 75.9, in which Seneca describes a category of advanced proficienss who have already "laid down all their passions and vices", even though their *fiducia* is still untested (*inexperta);* this implies that they a have already attained a certain level of *fiducia.*

[53] *Ep.* 23.6: *veri boni aviditas tuta est.*

compares it with the ecstasy of Corybantic revelers, the context of his argument makes it clear that he does not regard it as an ordinary, irrational emotion. Rather, he appropriates the vocabulary of emotion, sublimity and elevation to highlight the powerful effect of the truth on the human soul, and the feelings of inspiration and motivation it naturally brings about[54].

3. Moral Elevation and the Seeds of the Virtues

Seneca, in fact, repeatedly argues that moral elevation is not just rational, but natural and even providential. In *Letter* 104, he argues that "Nature has brought us forth great of soul" and "has given us a lofty spirit loving glory and seeking how it may live most honorably, not most safely".[55] Seneca's argument that the human mind has an inborn attraction to moral greatness appears to be influenced by Panaetius, who elevated *megalopsychia* to the rank of the cardinal virtues and connected it with an inborn attraction towards the truth and a natural impulse towards superiority[56]. Correspondingly, Seneca argues that Nature itself has imbued the honorable with an inherent attractiveness: in the *De Beneficiis,* he writes that "the power of the honorable to attract the minds of men is immense: its beauty floods our minds and sweeps us along, enchanted with wonder at its brilliance and splendor".[57] This argument is most fully articulated in *Letter* 120 – which I will

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[54] Cf. Seneca's appropriation of Platonic tropes and vocabulary, cf. *supra,* pp. 35-36.

[55] *Ep.* 104.23: *Magnanimos nos natura produxit, et ut quibusdam animalibus ferum dedit, quibusdam subdolum, quibusdam pavidum, ita nobis gloriosum et excelsum spiritum quaerentem ubi honestissime, non ubi tutissime vivat, simillimum mundo, quem quantum mortalium passibus licet sequitur aemulaturque; profert se, laudari et aspici credit.* Similarly, *Ep.* 39.2-3 and 71.5.

[56] Dyck (1981). Panaetius' emphasis on a natural, beneficial desire for pre-eminence may reflect an attempt to translate the Platonic notion of a *thumos* into the Stoic terminology of the *aphormai.* Perhaps in light of this, Seneca writes in *Ep.* 92.8 that the philosophers have wrongly neglected the spirited, ambitious part of the soul, "which, though unbridled, is yet better, and is certainly more courageous and more worthy of a man [than the desiring part of the soul].

[57] *Ben* IV.22.2: *Est videlicet magna in ipso opere merces rei et ad adliciendas mentes hominum ingens honesti potentia, cuius pulchritudo animos circumfundit et delenitos admiratione luminis ac fulgoris sui rapit*. Cf. Cic. *Off*. I.13, in which Cicero, perhaps reflecting Panaetius' views, mentions a *veri videndi cupiditas* and an *appetitio quaedam principatus, Off.* I.18 in which he mentions that all human beings are naturally drawn towards a

discuss at greater length in the next chapter – in which Seneca argues that all human beings possess seeds of the virtues. Such seeds naturally lead to an admiration of virtuous actions, from which the mind then deduces a conception of the good[58]. As we saw earlier, the expression "seeds of the virtues" is a common metaphor for the Stoic concept of the *aphormai,* the starting-points of the virtues with which all human beings have been endowed, and which can be activated by moral admonition.[59] The soul", Seneca argues in *Letter* 94, "carries within itself the seeds of everything that is honorable and these seeds are stirred to growth by advice"[60]. A similar argument appears in *Letter* 108, in which Seneca argues that a philosopher's "noble utterances" can bring about a form of ecstatic elevation that not only inspires his audiences but motivates them to act upon their newly acquired convictions:

> Some men are roused by magnificent words and enter into the speaker's emotions, eager in facial expression and mind and excited just like eunuchs raving on command at the sound of the Phrygian flute player. The beauty of the matter is what seizes and rouses them, not the sound of empty words. If something astute is said against death or something defiant against fortune, it is pleasing to act upon what you hear right away.[61]

Further on in the letter, he encourages Lucilius to employ this kind of "healing speech" with his own friends and to affect their minds (*adfeceris*) "in order to win them over to the love of what is honorable and good".[62] At first sight, Seneca's vocabulary (*adfectus/adficio, excito/concito, rapio*) and his comparison of devoted philosophy students with the ecstatic followers of Cybele seem to

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cognitionis et scientiae cupiditas and *Off.* I.55 in which he writes that the *honestum* (Panaetius' to *kalon*, cf. Brunt 2013:226-28) "moves us" (*movet nos*).

58 *Ep.* 120.4-5, cf. Inwood (2005:371-401).

59 Cf. Cic., *Tusc.* III.2, *Fin* V.18, V.43, and Graver (2002:77).

60 *Ep. 94.28: Omnium honestarum rerum semina animi gerunt, quae admonitione excitantur*

61 *Ep.*108.7: *Quidam ad magnificas voces excitantur et transeunt in adfectum dicentium alacres vultu et animo, nec aliter concitantur quam solent Phrygii tibicinis sono semiviri et ex imperio furentes. Rapit illos instigatque rerum pulchritudo, non verborum inanium sonitus.Si quid acriter contra mortem dictum est, si quid contra fortunam contumaciter, iuvat protinus quae audias facere.*

62 *Ep.* 108.12: *Hunc illorum adfectum cum videris, urge, hoc preme, hoc onera, relictis ambiguitatibus et syllogismis et cavillationibus et ceteris acuminis inriti ludicris. Dic in avaritiam, dic in luxuriam; cum profecisse te videris et animos audientium adfeceris, insta vehementius: veri simile non est quantum proficiat talis oratio remedio intenta et tota in bonum audientium versa.*

support the claim that their elevation is irrational and is in conflict with the Stoic ideal of *apatheia*. Schiesaro, though acknowledging that "the orgiastic frenzy of the converted is justified by their sources of inspiration", notes the "explicitly irrational overtones that mark the vocabulary of inspiration in this passage" and concludes that "these passages confirm quite explicitly that yielding to passions constitutes [...] a superior form of knowledge"[63]. Giancarlo Mazzoli, on the other hand, speculates that Seneca's argument is influenced by the Aristotelean notion that a certain irrational excitement could help to attain tranquility[64] In a similar vein, Mireille Armisen-Marchetti argues that Seneca believed in the healing effects of *enthusiasmos* and endorsed a poetics calculated to elicit this emotionally excited condition[65].

Though Seneca describes the moral elevation produced by admonition in terms that suggest an irrational form of enthusiasm, he clearly points out that it is not merely a form of aesthetic rapture but is brought about by a powerful, spontaneous recognition of the truth, to which audiences "bear witness […] in common agreement". [66] As Seneca puts it in a key passage in *Letter* 108:

> It is easy to rouse a listener to desire what is right; for nature has given the foundations and a seed of virtues to all human beings. We are all born to these things; when something provokes them, these goods of the spirit are roused as if from sleep. Have you not noticed how audiences in the theatre respond in unison whenever things are said that we publicly recognize and by consensus acknowledge to be true?[67]

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[63] Schiesaro ((2003:23)

[64] Mazzoli (1970:55-56). Schiesaro disagrees with Mazzoli's speculation, arguing that the vocabulary of *Ep.* 108 "does not suggest moderation and control" (2003:24).

[65] Armisen-Marchetti (1989:57-9)

[66] *Ep.* 108.12: *Cum haec [i.e. sententiae] atque eiusmodi audimus, ad confessionem veritatis adducimur.* Schiesaro (2003:23-4) acknowledges that "the orgiastic frenzy of the converted is justified by their sources of inspiration", though he insists on its "explicitly irrational overtones".

[67] *Ep.* 108.7-8 : *Facile est auditorem concitare ad cupidinem recti; omnibus enim natura fundamenta dedit semenque virtutum. Omnes ad omnia ista nati sumus: cum inritator accessit, tunc illa animi bona veluti sopita excitantur. Non vides quemadmodum theatra consonent quotiens aliqua dicta sunt quae publice adgnoscimus et consensu vera esse testamur?* Cf. §12, where he adds "*facillime enim tenera conciliantur ingenia ad honesti rectique amorem";* the verb *conciliantur* clearly refers to the theory of *oikeiosis* (Latin: *conciliatio*).

The fact that Seneca cites this key Stoic concept in both letters clearly indicates that he conceives of the moral elevation produced by admonition as compatible with basic Stoic principles. Most scholars commenting on the passages under discussion, however, either overlook this important claim or misinterpret it.[68] Mazzoli, for example, claims without explicit argument that the concept of the *aphormai* originated with Cleanthes and reflects a "voluntarism" that is fundamentally at odds with Chrysippus' intellectualism.[69] The concept of the *aphormai*, however, is not an "unorthodox" development, but was part of Stoic theory from Zeno of Citium onwards[70]. It is now widely accepted that the Stoics conceived of the *aphormai* as starting-points towards the formation of common conceptions. Such common conceptions, which correspond to the essential principles of Stoic philosophy, act as a natural criterion for judging the truth of appearances.[71] Seneca alludes to this notion when he writes that human beings are not born with a full-blown conception of the good, but with the seeds that will allow them to develop it[72].

As Gregory Staley has pointed out, Seneca's claim that all human beings spontaneously assent to the truth of certain basic moral precepts unmistakably refers to such common conceptions[73]. As Staley puts it "poetry utilizes common beliefs, on which the Stoics claimed that

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[68] Dihle and Schiesaro do not mention it at all. Setaioli (2001:143) briefly mentions that the *semina virtutum* refer to the *aphormai,* but does not develop this connection.

[69] Mazzoli (1970:26n21; 1990:90:91, 96 nn. 23-27; 1991:187) rightly notes that *Ep.* 108.8 verbally echoes Cleanthes (*SVF* I.566). Mazzoli's belief in a new 'voluntarism'may refer to the fact that Cleanthes elevated self-control (εγκράτεια) to the rank of the primary virtues (*SVF* 1.563). This emphasis on mental strength, however, does not entail a new 'voluntarist' conception but rather relies on the Stoic notion that the soul needs a right amount of pneumatic tension (Tieleman 2003:271)..

[70] Diogenes Laertius reports Zeno's argument that Nature has given us "pure starting-points" (VII.89: ἀφορμὰς ἀδιαστρόφους). Cf. Sandbach (1971:30), who argues that "Platonism gave to Stoicism a belief in inborn conceptions", and Dyson (2009: xxix) who argues that providential innatism, and the notion of prolepsis in particular, was Chrysippus' answer to the Platonic theory of forms and recollection.

[71] *SVF* II.473, cf. Scott (1988), Jackson-McCabe (2004), Inwood (2005: 271n1, 301n25), Gill (2006:181), Dyson (2009). As Dyson puts it, the *aphormai* "direct the mind's attention to certain presentations from which our moral conceptions are derived by analogy" (2009: xxxii).

[72] *Ep.* 120.3, cf. *Ep.* 73.16 and 49.1.In other passages, he elides this distinction and appears to suggest that certain conceptions are themselves inborn (*Ep.* 94.30, 117.6).

[73] Staley (2010:91)

their philosophy was grounded, to offer with greater clarity and therefore in a more persuasive way "evidence" [...] from which stable knowledge could be constructed"[74]. Seneca's allusion to common conceptions helps to explain why he believes that moral *sententiae* have such a direct and powerful effect: they immediately strike us as true because they reflect common conceptions towards which we are naturally attracted[75]. In sum, Seneca argues that a spontaneous elevation for the truth is a function of our inborn attraction towards the good and of universally shared moral conceptions. Even though he portrays this attraction towards the truth as a powerful passion, he makes it clear that it is a beneficial, rational feeling based on our inborn attraction towards the good.

4. From Impetus to Habitus: Exhortation and Moral Progress

This does not mean, however, that exhortation and the attendant moral elevation are simply superseded after entering upon serious philosophical study. Rather, Stoic *proficientes* need continued exhortation and admonition in order to prevent the initial elevation for philosophy from "growing cold" and to "ensure that what is now an urge (*impetus*) becomes a lasting disposition (*habitus*)", as Seneca puts it in *Letter* 16.[76] Exhortation, in other words, is not only beneficial to beginners. Even relatively advanced *proficientes* such as Lucilius and Seneca himself occasionally need a wake-up call in order to prevent them from slacking in their progress, as Seneca indicates in several other passages[77]. *In Letter* 109, Seneca argues that even Stoic sages need other sages to

[74] Staley (2010:69)

[75] As Sandbach notes (1971:32), preconceptions and common conceptions are closely linked with the idea of *enargeia*; both by their "clearness" convince us of their truthfulness.

[76] *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.* Cf. *Ep.* 34.2.

[77] In *Ep.* 56.8, he writes that both he and Lucilius "must rouse ourselves to action and busy ourselves with interests that are good, as often as we are in the grasp of an uncontrollable sluggishness". In *Ep.* 64.4, Seneca writes how

"move them rationally" and "according to nature" in order to stir up their virtues, help them maintain their mental habits, and strengthen their joy and faith[78]. As Robert Wagoner rightly points out, Seneca does not view philosophical education as a straight path with clearly delineated stages: a person may be making progress in certain areas of life but may need exhortation with respect to others[79].

Early on in *Letter* 108, Seneca explicitly notes that feelings of moral elevation, however upright, are often too weak and fleeting to lead to real moral progress. At the end of his description of the enthusiastic philosophy students, cited above, he points out that:

> They are moved by these sayings and behave as they are ordered. If only this state of mind would persist, if only the common people, who always advise against what is honorable did not immediately snatch away this noble impulse! Very few people have been able to bring home the state of mind they adopted. [80]

Further on in the same letter, Seneca argues that both the students themselves and the instructors are at fault for letting the initial *impetus* towards philosophy be extinguished. Instructors, he writes, let their students down by teaching them how to argue rather than how to live, whereas students are to blame for coming in with the goal of developing their wits rather than their souls[81]. Both Schiesaro and Mazzoli pass over these important caveats[82]. In addition, they neglect to mention that Seneca describes their elevation as an illustration of a zeal for philosophy that is in danger of "tripping over itself".[83] Though Seneca approvingly notes that they are excited about the beauty

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he recently felt inspired after reading the works of Sextius. And in *Ep.* 74.1, he notes that Lucilius' most recent letter had thus roused him from his sluggishness and prompted his memory.

78 *Ep.* 109.2, 5, 9, 11.

79 Wagoner (2011:52, 73).

80 *Ep.*108.7: *Adficiuntur illis et sunt quales iubentur. Si illa animo forma permaneat, si non impetum insignem protinus populus, honesti dissuasor, excipiat. Pauci illam quam conceperant mentem domum perferre potuerunt.* (punctuation changed from Reynolds).

81 *Ep.* 108.23: *Haec rettuli ut probarem tibi quam vehementes haberent tirunculi impetus primos ad optima quaeque, si quis exhortaretur illos, si quis inpelleret. Sed aliquid praecipientium vitio peccatur, qui nos docent disputare, non vivere, aliquid discentium, qui propositum adferunt ad praeceptores suos non animum excolendi sed ingenium.*

82 Schiesaro (2003:23), Mazzoli (1970:46)

83 In the opening paragraphs of the letter, Seneca states that he has written the letter in order to warn Lucilius against

of the content of the philosopher's words rather than just about their stylistic beauty, the unflattering comparison with the "eunuchs raving on command at the sound of the Phrygian piper" underscores that their zeal for philosophy is as yet undisciplined.[84]

In the paragraphs that follow, Seneca outlines how this natural elevation for the good can be harnessed in a way that supports real moral progress[85]. Ideally, rousing *sententiae* should be selected by a philosopher, who can harness their beneficial power by combining them with "healing instructions"[86]. Moral speeches and *sententiae*, Seneca argues, only fully benefit people after they learn the reasons for acting upon the injunctions contained within them. This claim echoes his recommendation in *Letter* 94 that "the admonition which assists suggestion by reason […] is more effective and settles deeper in the heart" than a stand-alone *sententia* or precept.[87] In *Letter* 40, Seneca vehemently criticizes the itinerant philosopher Serapio for his vapid content and rapid delivery, which does not allow the words to sink in and be subjected to argumentation. This kind of *popularis oratio*, he writes:

> aims to stir up the crowd and sweep along unprepared ears with its forcefulness but it does not offer room for argument, being carried away. How can something offer direction that is not directed? Doesn't the speech that is used to heal minds need to sink into us? Remedies do not work unless they take their time […] The things that terrify me must be alleviated, what irritates me needs to be calmed down, what deceives me must be shaken off, self-

a burning zeal for learning, which is in danger of "tripping over itself" (*Ep.* 108.1). He illustrates the danger of such an uncontrolled zeal for philosophy by describing two types of students "who have sat on for many years with a philosopher and not even taken on a tincture of thought". The first group goes to lectures just to enjoy the philosopher's words and to hang out with like-minded individuals. The second group is the zealous type of listener described in §7, which responds enthusiastically to everything the philosopher says.

84 Both Setaioli (2000: 145-6, 151) and von Albrecht (2004:78-79) have pointed out that the comparison of enthused listeners with the "emasculated priests of Cybele" has a markedly disparaging ring to it.

85 *Ep.* 108.9-23.

86 *Ep.* 108.9. Cf. *Ep*. 115.12, in which Seneca warns that misleading *sententiae* spoken in the theater can "set a torch to our emotions" (*adfectibus nostris facem subdant, Ep.* 115.12) and strengthen our greed.

87 *Ep.* 94 44 : *Illa vero efficacior est et altius penetrat quae adiuvat ratione quod praecipit.* Cf. *Ep.* 40.4, in which Seneca criticizes Serapio's speeches, which proceed so rapidly they cannot 'sink in'. As Delarue (1979:122) notes, there is something paradoxical about the fact that *sententiae*, by definition isolated utterances, get their maximal effect from being integrated within a continuous text. This paradox is particularly evident in *Ep.* 94.27, where Seneca writes that *sententiae* "are of great weight in themselves whether they be woven into the fabric or song or condensed into prose proverbs".

> indulgence must be restrained and greed rebuked: which of these things can happen in a hurry? What doctor cures the sick in passing?[88]

Seneca's criticism of Serapio's style clearly indicates that philosophical speeches, on his view, should not just carry away the reader, but should be truthful and offer food for later reflection.[89]. Rousing speeches and *sententiae* are needed for their striking, eye-opening effect, but as soon as this receptiveness has been created, *sententiae* need to be supplemented with rational explanation, in order to help their propositional content "sink down in the soul"[90] Seneca cites Cleanthes to support this point that the usefulness of *sententiae* lies in the fact they amplify a philosophical point by conveying it with maximum clarity, vividness and conciseness, qualities greatly prized by the Stoics[91]:

> As our breath produces a louder sound when it passes through the long and narrow opening of a trumpet, just so the rules of the art of poetry make our thoughts resound more clearly. The same words are heard more carelessly and have strike us less when they are expressed in regular speech; when meter is added and fixed feet compress an excellent saying, the same thought is, as it were, hurled with a more forceful throw[92].

Seneca's claim supports Michael Frede's argument that the Stoics thought an impression is not simply identical to its propositional content, but could be clear or confused depending on "how the proposition is thought in the impression" and on "the way in which we entertain certain

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[88] *Ep.* 40.4-5 : *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. Multum praeterea habet inanitatis et vani, plus sonat quam valet. Lenienda sunt quae me exterrent, conpescenda quae inritant, discutienda quae fallunt, inhibenda luxuria, corripienda avaritia: quid horum raptim potest fieri? Quis medicus aegros in transitu curat?*

[89] *Pace* Cooper (2006, esp. 47-48; cf. *supra* p. 31), who has argued that Seneca relies so heavily on the "rhetorical, emotion-evoking devices of the spiritual director" that he forgets the goal of attaining "a full philosophical understanding of the reasons why the truths of Stoicism really are true", Seneca clearly recognizes complementary roles for exhortation and rational explanation.

[90] *Ep.* 108.9. Cf. *Ep.* 2.2-4, 33, 65.1 84, 100.8-10, 114.17.

[91] Cf. Smiley (1919:51)

[92] *Ep.* 108.10: *Nam ut dicebat Cleanthes, 'quemadmodum spiritus noster clariorem sonum reddit cum illum tuba per longi canalis angustias tractum patentiore novissime exitu effudit, sic sensus nostros clariores carminis arta necessitas efficit.' Eadem neglegentius audiuntur minusque percutiunt quamdiu soluta oratione dicuntur: ubi accessere numeri et egregium sensum adstrinxere certi pedes, eadem illa sententia velut lacerto excussiore torquetur*.

propositions[93]. In sum, Seneca's endorsement of a hortatory rhetoric that fuels people's elevation for the moral good comes with the explicit *caveat* that the rhetorical power of *sententiae* needs to be subordinated to philosophical instruction. Rather than acknowledging that "yielding to passions constitutes [...] a superior form of knowledge", as Schiesaro puts it, Seneca argues that the main benefit of this moral elevation is that it prepares the mind for philosophical instruction[94].

Further on in *Letter* 108, Seneca offers his own philosophical education as an *exemplum* of how exhortation and moral elevation can act as a crucial source of inspiration. He describes how, as a young man, he used to "besiege" Attalus' school, being the first to enter and the last to leave, in order to follow the teacher on his way out. He vividly recalls the inspiration and desire for virtue, which Attalus' lectures inspired in him:

> [W]hen I heard Attalus denouncing vices, errors, and the evils of life, I often felt sorry for humankind and regarded him as a lofty and exalted being, surpassing the limits of humanity. [W]hen he began to recommend poverty and show that whatever exceeded our need was dead weight and a burden to whoever carried it, I often felt delight to leave school as a pauper. Whenever he castigated our desires and praised a chaste body, a sober table and a mind free not only of unlawful pleasures but even of superfluous ones, I was delighted to limit my throat and stomach.[95]

There is a distinct tongue-in-cheek element about Seneca's claim that he "often felt sorry for humankind" and "often felt delighted to leave school as a pauper" and this genteel self-mockery indicates that he perceives a certain impetuousness in his earlier elevation, similar to that of the

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[93] Frede (1986:104). Cf. *SVF* I.486, according to which Cleanthes argued that only meter, melody and rhythm could suitably convey "divine greatness". In *Ep.* 33.6, Seneca similarly affirms that "single items shaped like a verse sink in more easily". In *Ep.* 94.28, however, he writes that *sententiae* are of great weight "whether they aree woven into the fabric of song, or condensed into prose proverbs", and as Staley has observed (2010:29), two of the *sententiae* he cites as examples are non-metrical. This suggests that it is not so much musicality or meter that explains the effectiveness of *sententiae* but their conciseness, clarity and vividness.

[94] Schiesaro (2003:23).

[95] *Ep.* 108.13-14: *Ego certe cum Attalum audirem in vitia, in errores, in mala vitae perorantem, saepe miseritus sum generis humani et illum sublimem altioremque humano fastigio credidi* […] *Cum vero commendare paupertatem coeperat et ostendere quam quidquid usum excederet pondus esset supervacuum et grave ferenti, saepe exire e schola pauperi libuit. Cum coeperat voluptates nostras traducere, laudare castum corpus, sobriam mensam, puram mentem non tantum ab inlicitis voluptatibus sed etiam supervacuis, libebat circumscribere gulam ac ventrem.*

"emasculated priests of Cybele" he discussed earlier in the letter.[96] Still, he notes that this inspiration, in contrast to theirs, produced a number of moral resolutions in which he has persevered and led towards a life-long commitment to philosophy.[97]

In several other letters, Seneca points out that exhortation works especially well with young men, who are still relatively unspoiled and are easily moved by representations of virtuous behavior.[98] As long as they pay attention to the content and not the style of philosophical speeches, he argues, this excitability is innocent and can be a powerful spur towards moral progress:

> Young men, indeed, sometimes need to be allowed to to follow their impulses, but it should only be at times when they do so out of a mental urge and when they cannot force themselves to be silent. Such praise provides a certain kind of exhortation to the hearers themselves and stimulated the youthful mind. But let them be roused by the matter and not by the style; otherwise, eloquence does them harm, if it makes them enamored of itself and not of the subject[99].

In *Letter* 100, Seneca praises Fabianus, another of his teachers, for his ability to "inspire young men of promise and rouse their ambition to become like him, without making them hopeless of surpassing him"[100]. Though conceding that Fabianus' works sometimes lacked "the verve and spur of the orator […] and the sudden shock of epigrams" which he praised in Attalus, he argues that such stylistic imperfections did not detract from the overall effectiveness of his speeches[101]. Seneca characterizes his style as "not strong but elevated, not vehement or rushing but copious, not

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[96] Cf. von Albrecht (2004: 78). As Wagoner (2011:62) notes, Seneca ascribes to his younger self the very same characteristics, which Lucilius is portrayed as having, in particular his eagerness for philosophy.

[97] *Ep.* 108.15-16. On Seneca's self-presentation and occasional self-mockery in his 'autobiographical' passages, cf. Watson (2009).

[98] *Ep.* 52.10-14, 71.18-19, 24-25.

[99] *Ep.* 52.14: *Permittendum erit aliquando iuvenibus sequi impetum animi, tunc autem cum hoc ex impetu facient, cum silentium sibi imperare non poterunt; talis laudatio aliquid exhortationis adfert ipsis audientibus et animos adulescentium exstimulat. <At> ad rem commoveantur, non ad verba composita; alioquin nocet illis eloquentia, si non rerum cupiditatem facit sed sui.*

[100] *Ep.* 100.12: *quae adulescentem indolis bonae attollerent et ad imitationem sui evocarent sine desperatione vincendi, quae mihi adhortatio videtur efficacissima.* Cf. *Ep.* 64.5 in which Seneca similarly praises Fabianus' teacher Sextius.

[101] *Ep.* 100.8 : *Deest illis oratorius vigor stimulique quos quaeris et subiti ictus sententiarum.*

transparent but lucid" and praises it for being well ordered, calm and distinguished[102]. He concludes that Fabianus' speeches, notwithstanding their stylistic imperfections, produced a "most effective exhortation"[103].

Fabianus' style, in sum, closely resembles the ideal of philosophical rhetoric outlined in *Letter* 75, which emphasizes sincerity, the subordination of style to content, and an overriding concern with therapeutic rather than stylistic effect[104]. Together, Seneca's portrayals of Attalus' and Fabianus' pedagogical style allow us to sketch the outlines of his conception of a hortatory rhetoric that produces real moral elevation rather than the superficial excitement produced by the *popularis oratio* of Serapio[105].

5. Intoxication and Enthusiasm

In order to fully address the claim that Seneca recommends a form of irrational enthusiasm, I will now briefly turn to the famous conclusion of the *De Tranquillitate Animi*, in which Seneca praises a moral elevation brought about not by rousing *sententiae* or speeches but by physical intoxication[106]. Both Mazzoli and Schiesaro have cited this text as a "smoking gun" in support of

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[102] *Ep.* 100.10: *Sed non praestat omnia: non est fortis oratio eius, quamvis elata sit; non est violenta nec torrens, quamvis effusa sit; non est perspicua sed pura.*

[103] *Ep.* 100.12: *quae mihi adhortatio videtur efficacissima*

[104] Cf. Leeman (1963:280)

[105] Seneca's claim that Fabianus' delivery managed to sweep away its audiences (*rapuisset,* cf. *Ep.* 108.7: *rapit illos*) and detract their attention from the details (§3: *Praeterea ipso dicente non vacasset tibi partes intueri, adeo te summa rapuisset*) may seem to blur the distinction between him and Serapio, whom Seneca criticizes for his impassioned delivery which prevents his words from sinking in. Seneca makes it clear, however, that Fabianus' speech swept his students away through its truthful content, rather than through its dramatic delivery and rhetorical effect. Cf. *Ep.* 52.11, in which Seneca writes that during Fabianus' public talks "occasionally a loud shout of praise would burst forth, but it was prompted by the greatness of his subject, and not by the sound of oratory that slipped forth pleasantly and softly".

[106] *Tranq.* XVII.4-12.

their thesis that Seneca praises an irrational enthusiasm. Schiesaro even goes as far as to call it "the *locus classicus* for the Senecan theory of the enthused poet"[107].

Seneca beings his discussion by citing the exemplum of Cato, who "used to relax his mind with wine when cares of state had made it weary", and proceeds to recommend "generous drinking", along with walks, travel and company, as a way of elevating Serenus' mind and releasing it from cares[108].

> At times we should even reach the point of intoxication, not in order to drown ourselves but in order to relax; for it washes away our cares, and stirs the mind from its very depths, and heals its sorrows just as it heals certain bodily ills, and Liber owes his name, not to to the license he gives to the tongue, but to the fact that he frees the mind from the servitude to cares, releases it, and invigorates it, making it bolder in every undertaking.[109]

Seneca proceeds from praising physical intoxication to a lyrical description of the intoxication of the mind that elevates itself far beyond petty concerns and attains a form of sublimity[110]. In doing so, he cites Plato and Aristotle as venerable examples of philosophers recommending this state of moral elevation and enthusiasm:

> For whether we believe the Greek poet who said that "sometimes even raving is pleasant" or or Plato's saying that "the sane mind knocks in vain at the door of poetry," or Aristotle, who said that "no great genius has ever existed without some touch of madness", only an

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[107] Schiesaro (2003:21)

[108] *Tranq.* XVII.4.1: *Cato vino laxabat animum curis publicis fatigatum.* Cf. *Ep.* 104.7, in which Seneca notes that that traveling has healed him of a *marcor corporis dubii et male cogitantis,* and has restored both his physical and his mental energy. As Chambert (2002:72) points out, Seneca's recommendation is consonant with Celsus' argument that travel and physical activity is a good remedy for *imbecilli* (*De Medicina* I.1.2). Though Seneca often recommends traveling and exercising as a remedy for a certain nervous discontent, he equally denounces a restless *iactatio* that increases rather than cures restlessness, even within *De Tranq.* (II.13-15). On Seneca's ambivalent position towards travel, cf. Chambert (2002) and Montiglio (2006, esp. 563-4).

[109] *De Tranq.* XVII.8 : *Non numquam et usque ad ebrietatem veniendum, non ut mergat nos sed ut deprimat; eluit enim curas et ab imo animum movet et ut morbis quibusdam ita tristitiae medetur, Liberque non ob licentiam linguae dictus est [inventor vini] sed quia liberat servitio curarum animum et adserit vegetatque et audaciorem in omnis conatus facit.* Cf. *Ep.* 95.38, in which Seneca writes that the soul must be freed (*solvendus est*) before it can benefit from instruction.

[110] Though Seneca's recommendation may at first sight seem to depart from the Stoics' ideal of a cognitively based therapy, as Setaioli argues (2001:148) Teun Tieleman (2003:140-197, esp. 162-66) has persuasively shown that Zeno and Chrysippus already accepted that psychological states could sometimes be cured by physical means. In the *De Ira* (II.19-20), Seneca discusses the usefulness of such physical remedies in greater detail. On drunkenness in Seneca's philosophical works and in Stoicism in general, cf. Motto & Clark (1990), Richardson-Hay (2001, esp. 35-40) and Tieleman (2003:163-67). In the *De Ira* (II.19-20), Seneca discusses the usefulness of physical remedies in greater detail.

> excited mind is able to say something grand and transcendent. When it has scorned the vulgar and the everyday and has risen up with a holy inspiration, only then it sings with an expression that is beyond mortal.[111]

Mazzoli and Schiesaro claim that Seneca's invocation of the tradition of artistic enthusiasm and his citation of Platonic and Aristotelean ideas signals that he is abandoning Stoic ideas[112]. Evoking the theories of one's predecessors, however, need not entail adopting their doctrines[113]. In fact, Seneca explicitly states his own conviction that only the roused mind can say something great regardless of whether we share their beliefs (*sive … credimus*). As we have shown earlier, Seneca often appropriates the traditional vocabulary of sublimity for his own purposes, lending an aura of tradition to his own ultimately Stoic claims[114]. This strategy of adopting the terminology of rival schools as a way of assimilating their claims to one's own was, in fact, a common strategy among Stoics[115].

As in *Letters* 94 and 108, then, we need to go beyond his vocabulary and look carefully at the context of his argument, and its Stoic antecedents, before drawing far-reaching conclusions about his supposed heterodoxy. Seneca's prescriptions in *On Tranquillity*, in fact, shows many resemblances with his discussion about the usefulness of philosophical enthusiasm in *Letters* 94 and 108. As with the rousing speeches and *sententiae* discussed in those letters, the physical remedies Seneca prescribes to Serenus should be regarded as a form of preliminary treatment,

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[111] *De Tranq.* XVII.10-11: *Nam sive Graeco poetae credimus 'aliquando et insanire iucundum est', sive Platoni 'frustra poeticas fores compos sui pepulit', sive Aristoteli 'nullum magnum ingenium sine mixtura dementiae fuit': non potest grande aliquid et super ceteros loqui nisi mota mens. Cum vulgaria et solita contempsit instinctuque sacro surrexit excelsior, tunc demum aliquid cecinit grandius ore mortali.*

[112] Mazzoli (1970:52), Schiesaro (2003:23)

[113] On Platonic echoes in Seneca, cf. *supra*, pp. 35-36

[114] Cf. *infra,* pp. 167-7.

[115] Cf. Cavalca-Schiroli (1981:138-140), Tieleman (2003:208) and Inwood (2005:23-65), who shows that Seneca sometimes entertains a Platonic dualism in order to show that his Stoic conclusions would hold even on the basis of a different moral psychology.

designed to counteract the physical imbalances in his soul that prevent him from making moral progress[116].

Firstly, Seneca's description of the beneficial effect of enthusiasm, which raises the soul to the heights of sublimity, unmistakably echoes his discussion about the feelings of *magnitudo animi*, *fiducia* and *cupiditas veri* inspired by moral maxims in *Letters* 94 and 108. Secondly, notwithstanding its aesthetic overtones, the argument that this enthusiasm is grounded in a "holy inspiration" (*sacer instinctus*), a natural capacity of the soul to be aroused to lofty thoughts is reminiscent of the claim that inborn seeds of the virtues naturally lead us toward feelings of elevation[117]. Thirdly, Seneca's explicit warning against habitual or heavy drinking recalls his caveats about the limitations and dangers of philosophical enthusiasm in *Letter 108:* immediately following his recommendation of therapeutic "generous drinking", he adds that "as in the case of freedom, so with wine, there is a healthy temperance" and that "this should be done only on few occasions, in case the mind develops a bad habit"[118]. Finally, his emphasis on the need to "fortify the wavering mind with fervent and unremitting care" is paralleled by his emphasis in the other

[116] Seneca's encouragement to Serenus to drink, go out, and seek company can, in Hippocratic terms, be seen as a homeopathic remedy, designed to counter his weak and anxious disposition; Seneca's claim that drunkenness makes the mind *audacior* recalls his argument in *Ep.* 95.36-37 that minds suffering from an excess of *audacia* should be restrained, whereas sluggish minds should be aroused and rid of misguided fear. Both Serenus' own description of his nervous oscillation, which he refers to as his *bonae mentis infirmitas*, and Seneca's diagnosis of it firmly put Serenus in this second category. In section II, Seneca variously describes Serenus' condition as *inertia, taedium displicentia sui*, *animi volutatio*, *otii sui tristis atque aegra patientia* and *fastidium sui*; importantly, he notes that he needs greater trust in himself (*fidem tibi,* II.2).

[117] As Cavalca-Schiroli (1981:140) points out, the term *instinctus* is often used to refer to poetic inspiration (cf. Sen. *Brev* IX.2 and Quint. *Inst. Or.* X.24) Berger (1960:356-7) has pointed out the similarity with Seneca's notion of a *sacer spiritus* which acts "as monitor and guardian of our good and bad behavior" (E*p.* 41.2), but suggests without explicit argument that the *sacer instinctus* of Tranq. XVII cannot be identical to it, as it is connected with an irrational quality of the soul, whereas the *sacer spiritus* of *Ep.* 41 is connected with the rational part of the soul. Setaioli (2000:148n197 points out that the notion of a *sacer instinctus* is common in the rhetorical tradition (e.g. *Subl.* 33.5, Quint. *Inst.* 10.1.81, 12.10.24), but he rightly adds that Seneca's terminological borrowings by no means entail his uncritical adoption of the theories at their origin. Cf. further Cic. *De Or* 2.194, *Tusc.* 1.64, *Arch.* 18 and *Div.* 1.80 as well as Hor. *Ars* 295-98.

[118] *Tranq.* XVII.9: *Sed ut libertatis ita vini salubris moderatio est […] Sed nec saepe faciendum est, ne animus malam consuetudinem ducat.*

texts on the need to continually repeat virtuous maxims to oneself and to relentlessly exhort individuals who have shown an interest in philosophy[119].

In sum, Seneca's claim that only a *mota mens* can attain a loftiness of spirit and expression, does not amount to an endorsement of a condition that is irrational. As I have shown earlier, he takes pains to distinguish such a *mota mens,* a mind that is aroused or moved by the truth, from a mind that is puffed up and swollen with empty grandiosity[120]. Seneca's recommendation to Serenus, then, illustrates his belief in a natural, beneficial enthusiasm that is an expression of our inborn inclination towards the good. Instead of abandoning Stoic principles, Seneca suggests that his own Stoic tradition offers an equivalent of the enthusiasm traditionally associated with the artistic genius that is grounded in our inborn *sacer instinctus*.

6. Conclusion

In the texts surveyed in this chapter, Seneca offers a clear argument for the necessity of exhortation in a philosophical education. Without first liberating the mind and creating a receptiveness for philosophical instruction, he argues, a philosopher's words will fail to have the desired impact. To bring about this receptiveness, a philosopher should offer vivid, arresting speeches, sprinkled with *sententiae,* in order to awaken his students' inborn attraction towards the moral good. Alternatively, physical remedies, including intoxication, could be recommended, to relax the mind and help it to attain a humoral equilibrium that allowed it to better fulfill its functions.

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[119] *Tranq.* XCVII.12: *[I]llud tamen scito, nihil horum satis esse validum rem inbecillam serVantibus, nisi intenta et adsidua cura circumit animum labentem.* Cf. *Ep.*94.46-7 and 108.12.

[120] *Supra,* pp. 138-39. In *Ep.* 39.3, Seneca writes that ardent enthusiasm sets our soul in motion *(in motu).* This 'movement of the soul', clearly is not an irrational movement but a rational movement of the soul of the kind Seneca alludes to in *Ep.* 109. In that letter (11-12), he mentions that the souls of both sages and ordinary men can be moved (*movere)* "skillfully" *(perite),* rationally (*rationaliter*) or "in accordance with nature" (*secundum naturam movere).*

Scholars have often worried that Seneca's endorsement of intoxication and of a rhetoric that brings about feelings of enthusiasm and elevation is at odds with his Stoic beliefs, in particular his commitment to the ideal of *apatheia*. I have argued on the contrary that Seneca's arguments for the usefulness of exhortation and admonition can, in fact, be harmonized with his theoretical commitments as a Stoic. Even though he uses the vocabulary of emotion, the elevation Seneca describes is clearly not an ordinary, irrational emotion.

First of all, he explicitly states that this effect is brought about by truthful words and reflects a real greatness of soul and confidence. Further, by arguing that this effect is a function of the seeds of the virtues within us, Seneca grounds his argument in a recognizably Stoic conception of human nature. Seneca's claim that admonition naturally elicits morally beneficial feelings amounts to recognition of a category distinct from both ordinary emotions and the *eupatheiai* experienced by Stoic sages. In doing so, Seneca fills a gap in Stoic theory pointed out by modern scholars, and offers a realistic account of moral progress[121]. Rather than arguing that non-sages only have irrational emotions and that only sages can experience virtuous feelings, Seneca argues that all human beings are born with capacity to have virtuous feelings, which can offer an impetus towards moral progress. Still, he repeatedly argues that merely experiencing such beneficial feeling is not enough. In order to be truly helpful in the long run, the wisdom contained in lofty philosophical utterances must be thoroughly assimilated through continuous reflection and a rational understanding of their truths contained within them. Moral enthusiasm, in sum, must be deepened and given a solid intellectual foundation in order to lead to real wisdom.

[121] On this gap, cf. *supra*, pp. 12-14.

Chapter 5: Emotion and the Rhetoric of Exemplarity

Early on in his *Moral Letters,* Seneca promises to send his friend Lucilius a number of books that he himself has found helpful for his moral development. He even bookmarks certain passages, urging his friend to start immediately on the selections that he most approves and admires.[1] At the same time, however, he stresses the limits of moral precepts, such as those contained in his beloved books. The power of precepts, he argues, pales in comparison to the moral benefits Lucilius will derive from contemplating examples of virtuous action in context. "The living voice and conversation will do you more good than the text," Seneca tells his friend. "You must come to witness the real thing, first because men trust their eyes more than their ears; next, because the approach through recommendations is long, but that of *exempla* is short and effective."[2]

What Lucilius needs more than inspirational literature, then, is an exemplary role model. Even though he goes on to invoke exemplary teacher-student relationships of the past (Cleanthes and Zeno, Plato and Socrates, Epicurus and Metrodorus), Seneca stops short of assuming this mantle of exemplarity for himself, noting that he has reached out to Lucilius "not merely that you may derive benefit, but that you may confer benefit; for we can assist each other greatly"[3]. Rather than setting himself up as a model to observe and imitate, Seneca repeatedly argues that, given the scarcity of real-life *exempla* in contemporary society, Lucilius should to "turn to the ancients", heroic models of virtue such as Socrates and Cato, who can be of just as much benefit as the living.[4].

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1 *Ep.* 6.5: *Mittam itaque ipsos tibi libros, et ne multum operae inpendas dum passim profutura sectaris, inponam notas, ut ad ipsa protinus quae probo et mirror accedas.*

2 *Ep.* 6.5: *Plus tamen tibi et viva vox et convictus quam oratio proderit; in rem praesentem venias oportet, primum quia homines amplius oculis quam auribus credunt, deinde quia longum iter est per praecepta, breve et efficax per exempla.*

3 On the difficulties inherent in the process of controlling attempts to fashion oneself as an exemplum, cf. Lowrie (2007), who discusses the examples of Cicero and Augustus.

4 *Ep.* 52.7: *Tu vero etiam ad priores revertere, qui vacant; adiuvare nos possunt non tantum qui sunt, sed qui fuerunt*.

Readers of Seneca, in fact, have long observed his fondness of *exempla*, dramatic stories that are presented as a source of inspiration and a model for emulation. Whether it is the gladiator "insulting death" by choking himself to death with a sponge-stick or Hostius Quadra relishing the magnification of his sexual indulgence through a distorted mirror, Seneca's *exempla* – positive *and* negative – stick with the reader in a way that few of his more technical arguments do[5]. Critics, however, have taken issue with what they perceive as Seneca's wanton indulgence in rhetorical *color* and his tendency to privilege example over argument. As Charles Costa argues, Seneca is often accused – justly in his view – of "pil[ing] *exemplum* on *exemplum*, far beyond the need to convince us". "There are many passages", he writes, "in which Seneca's love of his own technique gets the better of him, and he indulges himself to what seems to modern readers boring extremes"[6]. Other scholars such as John Cooper and Marcus Wilson even argue that Seneca's predilection for using *exempla* causes him to neglect the theoretical underpinnings of Stoic philosophy[7].

In this chapter, I will argue that this opposition between 'philosophical' argument and 'rhetorical' example is a false one, and show how Seneca's frequent invocation of vivid *exempla* is an integral part of a carefully thought-out admonitory strategy. Seneca's lively descriptions of exemplary figures, I claim, do not just aim to add rhetorical flourish to what might otherwise be a dry argument, but convert *exempla* from static cultural role models to dynamic tools for philosophical learning.[8] As A.A. Long has perceptively noted, traditional Roman *exempla* and

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While Seneca repeatedly disavows claims to sagehood or exemplarity, Brad Inwood rightly notes his tendency for self-exemplification and "citing his own experience alongside that of others" either "as an *exemplum* or as particularly persuasive evidence" (Inwood 2005: 342, 352). As Nussbaum has argued, the *Letters to Lucilius* as a whole can be seen as "one long rich exemplum, an open-ended and highly complex story of two concrete lives", exemplifying not so much moral perfection as the sincere and collaborative pursuit of it, in spite of occasional setbacks and limitations.

5 *Ep.* 70.20, *N.Q.* I.16.

6 Costa (1997:112-3)

7 Cooper (2006:47) and Wilson (2013:105), discussed *supra,* pp. 39, 90-91, 148.

8 As Alex Dressler (2012:169) puts it, Seneca moves from the "historical or historiographic third-person exemplum that looks backward to a previous deed" towards a "subjective-subjunctive exemplum that "happens right now."

doctrinal pronouncements offer a "normative standard for self-assessment and aspiration" but lack what he calls "interlocutory force", that is to say, the ability to engage with the reader in a more continuous fashion[9]. As I will show, however, Seneca aims to endow the exemplary characters in his work with a form of interlocutory force by involving the reader in a philosophical drama in which the *exempla* speak to the reader in the form of *prosopopoeiai* or are apostrophized by the author, thus encouraging his readers towards a form of engagement that goes beyond straightforward emulation.[10] What is key here is vividness: although Seneca experiments with many different literary forms of presenting his *exempla*, they all aim to show the reader in a very concrete and relatable way what the good life – or its opposite – looks like.

In addition to this heuristic, intellectual function of *exempla*, however, Seneca often emphasizes the emotional responses he expects them to elicit from his readers: admiration and elevation when they are confronted with virtuous *exempla*, and disgust or shame-by-association when confronted with vicious *exempla*. At first sight, Seneca's affirmation of the emotional effect of *exempla*, like his adoption of shaming criticism or sublime speech discussed in previous chapters, appears to conflict with his philosophical commitments as a Stoic. As I will show, however, Seneca believes that this tension between admiring moral perfection in another person and feeling ashamed of one's own imperfection (or disgusted at the vices of others) can bring about a determination to follow in the exemplary person's footsteps[11]. Such feelings of admiration,

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9 Long (2010:28)

10 On the dramatic aspect of Seneca's philosophical works, cf. Hijmans (1966) and Traina (1987). As A.A. Long (2010:28) notes, "exemplary figures and doctrinal statements provide the occurrent self with a normative standard for self-assessment and aspiration. Yet these figures and texts, central to the tradition though they are, have no interlocutory force".

11 Cf. Kamtekar (1998:154) who argues that Epictetus similarly "combats diffidence on the one hand and conceit on the other by reminding us alternately of our god-like potential and our nearly worthless actual state, between who we are and how we are living (1.19.1, 6). As Kamtekar points out, "[t] he resulting self-knowledge, partial and approximate until it has been systematized, gives us a polarized sense of self-worth, and the difference between the two poles is supposed to goad us into self-improvement."

shame, or disgust are neither *eupatheiai*, associated with the already wise, nor ordinary misguided emotions, but intermediary states, reflecting a budding recognition of the moral good, and the need to strive for a fuller moral understanding. As David Konstan suggests, the reason why even ordinary, non-wise individuals feel troubled by their lack of virtue is that they are able to feel "distress at the awareness of our own inconsistency and a dissatisfaction with our lives, based on a groping intuition that we are naturally constituted to experience something better"[12]. This groping intuition, I would add, is brought about by the inborn inclinations towards the good (*aphormai*) that, on Seneca's view, are the basis of moral progress.

Seneca explicitly articulates this connection between inborn inclinations and the rhetorical power of the *exemplum* in *Letter* 120. In this important letter, which will be discussed in greater detail below, Seneca argues that human beings are naturally drawn to models of virtuous behavior and that the admiration we feel for them, or the aversion we feel from the exemplarily *vicious* person, stem from our inborn inclination towards the good. As such, the ongoing engagement with an *exemplum* can support the development of a conception of the good. In the long run, developing this inborn inclination will allow us to act on the basis of an internalized moral understanding, rather than by following precepts or examples. Seneca's use of the *exemplum*, therefore, represents an external means of cultivating an internal barometer of moral right and wrong.

This explicit connection between exemplarity and the concept of the moral good allows us to dispel the misguided notion that Seneca's heavy reliance on *exempla* somehow reduces his approach to second-rate philosophy. On the contrary, exemplarity can be seen as an instrument by which Seneca "hooks" readers still committed to conventional values and nudges them towards universal truths through particulars that compel them[13]

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[12] Konstan (2009:477)

[13] As Roller (2001:106) argues, Seneca often significantly refashions traditional *exempla*, focusing on their virtuous

Even this very movement from conventional values towards philosophical values can be mediated by *exempla.* As I will show at the end of the chapter, Seneca repeatedly urges his addressees, and his readers, to pretend that an exemplary person, in front of whom they would be ashamed to do wrong, is watching their every action. This ongoing engagement between *proficientes* and their chosen *exemplum* supports their attempt to discover moral rules and find out how Stoic principles should be put to work in particular situations. The *exemplum,* in other words, acts as a conduit that enables Seneca to harness his interlocutors' emotions towards moral progress and the development of a conception of the moral good.

1. The Exemplum as Proof and Model

The *exemplum* served an important function in aristocratic socialization, and well-known orators as well as moralists mobilized their authority in order to lend weight to their rhetorical arguments. As such, discussions of rhetoric typically discuss exempla within the context of *inventio,* the discovery of arguments. Quintilian, for example, defines an exemplum as "the adducing of some past action real or assumed which may serve to persuade the audience of the truth of the point which we are trying to make."[14]

The scholarship on Seneca has seen a revival of interest in his employment of *exempla* as proof

intentions rather than on the greatness of their actions. In doing so, Roller argues, Seneca offers "a new set of ethical signposts to orient thought and action, new means by which aristocrats can pursue familiar cultural imperatives...in a world in which the old signposts increasingly fail to point the way." In a similar vein, Alex Dressler (2012: 271) argues that "the Senecan exemplum entails an alteration of authority, a pointing up of its collaborative rather than coercive aspects, and therefore a break with the traditions of the closed, masculine, conservative and militarized society of Roman social and political thought".

[14] Quint. *Inst. Or.* V.11.6: *Potentissimum autem est inter ea quae sunt huius generis quod proprie vocamus exemplum, id est rei gestae aut ut gestae utilis ad persuadendum id quod intenderis commemoratio. Intuendum igitur est totum simile sit an ex parte, ut aut omnia ex eo sumamus aut quae utilia erunt*. In his *On Invention* (I.49), Cicero similarly describes the exemplum as "that which confirms or invalidates a case by some authority, or by what has happened to some man, or under some especial circumstances".

for rhetorical arguments and the way in which he appropriates their recognized cultural authority for his own philosophical purposes.[15] But apart from its power as a precedent or proof, the *exemplum* served as a rhetorical device favored for the stylistic splendor it added to a speech, and the powerful emotional effect it could exert on the reader or hearer. As the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* puts it:

> [*An* exemplum] renders a thought more brilliant when used for no other purpose than beauty; clearer, when throwing more light upon what was somewhat obscure; more plausible, when giving the thought greater verisimilitude; more vivid, when expressing everything so lucidly that the matter can, I may almost say, be touched by the hand.[16]

Seneca's *exempla* —whether laid out in vivid tales or enlivened through *prosopopoeiai* and other rhetorical devices—forcefully combine what Roller has called an "illustrative" and an "injunctive" dimension, in that they both portray virtuous behavior and exhort his addressees towards to pursuit of the moral ideals they embody.[17]

Though I will focus in this chapter on the emotional impact of the *exemplum* – an aspect of the Senecan *exemplum* that has been largely neglected by scholars – I by no means intend to downplay its function as a form of *argument* or suggest that it merely serves as a rhetorical gimmick designed to bedazzle the reader, as John Cooper has suggested. Seneca after all, repeatedly emphasizes that the *exemplum* is a teaching instrument, which conveys a conception of the moral good by showing virtuous behavior at work. In *Letter* 98, for example, he argues that "what ought to be done must be learned from one who does it" and encourages Lucilius to "note what courage a prudent man possesses against death, or against pain, when the one approaches and

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[15] As Matthew Roller (2001: 88-97) points out, Seneca expands the common stock of aristocratic exempla from the Roman past by highlighting the virtuous actions of contemporaries, women, foreigners, and even social outcasts such as gladiators, in an effort show that virtuous action is open to all.

[16] *Auct. ad Her* IV.62

[17] Roller (2004:52). Cf. Dressler (2012: 152), who notes that the *Senecan* exemplum brings together "vivification and injunction".

the other weighs heavily."[18] *Exempla*, in other words, do not just teach about virtuous action in terms of universal challenges such as death and physical pain, but are particularly useful in showing how virtuous intentions can be successfully realized in shifting contexts. As Martha Nussbaum argues, "the importance of *exempla* and narrative in Stoic teaching is […] closely connected to the importance Stoics attach to concreteness", and the fact that a fully virtuous action depends not just on the action's outcomes but on the appropriateness of the actor's thoughts and intentions, which are highly contextually dependent.[19]

To help the *proficiens* distinguish between virtuous and vicious actions in context, Seneca advocates a form of admonition named *ethologia*, which "presents the signs and marks of each virtue" in order that "similar conditions can be told apart."[20] As Seneca explicitly points out, this is fundamentally just a form of instruction by different means, using models instead of precepts to get a moral point across.[21] Understanding why exemplary figures act the way they do, however, does not necessarily spark moral progress. Successful emulation, in fact, presupposes not only that the *proficiens* believes an exemplary person is worthy of being imitated, but also that the student *desires* to follow in the *exemplum*'s footsteps. Most importantly, the *proficiens* must gain

[18] *Ep* 98.17: *Hoc est, mi Lucili, philosophiam in opere discere et ad verum exerceri, videre quid homo prudens animi habeat contra mortem, contra dolorem, cum illa accedat, hic premat; quid faciendum sit a faciente discendum est.*

[19] Nussbaum (1994:339). Cf. Langlands (2011) who persuasively argues Roman *exempla* should not be seen as rigidly prescriptive, dogmatic models but as heuristic tools that allow for "flexibility and situational variability".

[20] *Ep.* 95.65: *Posidonius non tantum praeceptionem […] sed etiam suasionem et consolationem et exhortationem necessariam iudicat; his adicit causarum inquisitionem, aetiologian quam quare nos dicere non audeamus, cum grammatici, custodes Latini sermonis, suo iure ita appellent, non video. Ait utilem futuram et descriptionem cuiusque virtutis; hanc Posidonius 'ethologian' vocat, quidam 'characterismon' appellant, signa cuiusque virtutis ac vitii et notas reddentem, quibus inter se similia discriminentur.*

[21] *Ep.* 95.65: *Haec res eandem vim habet quam praecipere; nam qui praecipit dicit 'illa facies si voles temperans esse', qui describit ait 'temperans est qui illa facit, qui illis abstinet'. Quaeris quid intersit? Alter praecepta virtutis dat, alter exemplar.*.

confidence that he can succeed in doing so.[22] Seneca, in fact, repeatedly signals his awareness that philosophical principles and models are useless if a person does not *want* to follow them.[23]

2. Admiration and Inspiration

Seneca's approach to *exempla* provides a solution to this practical problem of motivation. Just as moral *sententiae*, discussed in the previous chapter, exert a powerful motivational effect in and of themselves—even upon individuals who are caught up in misguided beliefs and behaviors—Seneca believes that a well-chosen *exemplum* can spark an immediate and powerful desire for moral transformation. At the beginning of the *Consolation to Marcia*, for instance, Seneca announces that he will confront Marcia with *exempla* rather than with dry arguments in order to strengthen her motivation to surmount her grief:

> [D]ifferent people should be treated in different ways: some are guided by argument, others need to be confronted with famous names and an authority that takes doesn't leave their spirit free, dazzled as they are by contemplating brilliant things[24]

At first sight, this passage appears to contrast a form of admonition that appeals to reason with a form that foregoes reason and instead appeals to the emotions. The words *stupor, obstupefacio,* and their cognates, in fact, typically carry a negative connotation in Seneca's writings. In many of his works, he uses these terms to refer to people's confusion about natural phenomena or their misguided admiration for riches or other insubstantial goods.[25]. In other passages, however, Seneca

[22] As Alan Brinton (1986:252) writes, *exempla* "[s]ometimes […] serve merely as illustrations. Sometimes they are used to show the possibility of exhibiting certain character traits under adverse circumstances. Such examples are meant to give the reader courage for the life of virtue".

[23] *Ep.* 34.3, 71.36, 80.4, helpfully discussed in Inwood (2005:137-140).

[24] *Ad Marciam* II.1: *[A]liter enim cum alio agendum est: quosdam ratio ducit, quibusdam nomina clara opponenda sunt et auctoritas quae liberum non relinquat animum ad speciosa stupentibus* (my translation). Translation lightly modified.

[25] E.g. *Dial.* VII.2.4, VII.20.6, VII.22.5, VII.26.3, VII.26.8, IX.8.5, XI.9.5; *Ben.* VI.30.3; *Ep.* 24.14, 42.7, 87.5, 91.8,

describes a morally beneficial kind of *stupor* that derives from the contemplation of the good. In *Letter* 64, for example, he writes that "the very contemplation of wisdom takes much of my time; I gaze upon her with bewilderment (*stupor*), just as I sometimes gaze upon the firmament itself, which I often behold as if I saw it for the first time."[26] In *Letter* 115, he similarly waxes lyrical about the effect of contemplating exemplary people, and argues that we should worship, love and admire them:[27]

> If we were allowed to look into a good man's soul, oh what a beautiful, holy, magnificent, calm, and radiant sight would we behold – resplendent on one side with justice and temperance, on the other with bravery and wisdom![28] […] If someone saw this appearance, more exalted and more radiant than the mortal eye is used to, would he not pause as if struck dumb by an epiphany and utter a silent prayer, saying: "May it be lawful to have looked upon it!"?[29]

The contemplation of an exemplary person, he argues, will not only help us to perceive virtue, but will also help us to "get a view of evil and the deadening influences of a sorrow-laden soul" and to "understand how contemptible the things we admire are."[30] Just as in *Letter* 94, Seneca here describes the process of removing obstacles to moral awareness and motivation in terms of recovering the capacity of sight:

> There is no one, I tell you, who would not burn with love for this vision of virtue, if we could only see it. For now there are many things that cut off our vision, blinding it with too bright a light, or obscuring it with too much darkness. If, however, just as the eyesight can be sharpened and cleared with certain drugs, we are similarly willing in too free our mind's eye from hindrances, we will then be able to perceive virtue, be it buried in the body - even if poverty stands in the way, and low status or ill repute block the path. We will

110.14, 110.17, 122.4. As Bartsch 2007:90) notes, this kind of astonishment is a reaction that we might expect a Stoic to avoid and combat.

[26] *Ep* 64.6: *Mihi certe multum auferre temporis solet contemplatio ipsa sapientiae; non aliter illam intueor obstupefactus quam ipsum interim mundum, quem saepe tamquam spectator novus video. Veneror itaque inventa sapientiae inventoresque; adire tamquam multorum hereditatem.*

[27] *Vereri* (§ 4), *colere* (§ 5), *amare* (§6), *mirere* (§ 8).

[28] *Ep.* 115.3: *Si nobis animum boni viri liceret inspicere, o quam pulchram faciem, quam sanctam, quam ex magnifico placidoque fulgentem videremus, hinc iustitia, illinc fortitudine, hinc temperantia prudentiaque lucentibus!*

[29] *Ep.* 115.4: *Si quis viderit hanc faciem altiorem fulgentioremque quam cerni inter humana consuevit, nonne velut numinis occursu obstupefactus resistat et ut fas sit vidisse tacitus precetur.* Cf. *Ep* 94.40-42, in which Seneca writes about the salutary effect of being around wise men, which he compares with the effect of beholding the images of gods in temples.

[30] *Ep.* 115.7-8: *malitiam et aerumnosi animi veternum perspiciemus; tunc intellegere nobis licebit quam contemnenda miremur.*

then, I tell you, behold that true beauty, even if covered in sordidness.[31]

Seneca's vocabulary in both passages is reminiscent of Plato's description of the soul beholding the Forms in the *Phaedrus* and his description of the philosophical gaze in the *Alcibiades I*, which sees its true nature reflected in another soul.[32] Such Platonic echoes, however, do not mean that Seneca should be seen as an eclectic philosopher who freely combines Stoic and Platonic principles, as some scholars have suggested.[33] Rather, he appropriates a Platonic vocabulary to add luster and authority to a philosophical conception supported by Stoic views.[34] Indeed, Seneca portrays the *exemplum* in familiar Platonic *topoi* in order to make an unambiguously Stoic argument about the proper way to develop moral insight.

In *Letter* 120, which we briefly discussed at the beginning of this chapter, Seneca explains at greater length not only why human beings spontaneously respond to *exempla* with admiration and veneration but also how this initial impulse can lead to moral insight. Human beings, he argues, obtain a conception of the moral good by contemplating examples of goodness in action and by deducing a conception of goodness from them by means of analogy. As he puts it:

> Kind deeds, humane deeds, brave deeds, had at times amazed us; thus we began to admire them as if they were perfect. Underneath, however, there were many faults, hidden by the appearance and the brilliance of certain conspicuous acts; these we filter out. Nature urges us to amplify praiseworthy things – there's no one who doesn't exalts renown beyond the truth. From such deeds, then, we deduced the conception of a great good[35]

The tendency to respond to exemplary figures with admiration and to bracket their imperfections,

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[31] *Ep.* 115.6:*Nemo, inquam, non amore eius arderet si nobis illam videre contingeret; nunc enim multa obstrigillant et aciem nostram aut splendore nimio repercutiunt aut obscuritate retinent. Sed si, quemadmodum visus oculorum quibusdam medicamentis acui solet et repurgari, sic nos aciem animi liberare inpedimentis voluerimus, poterimus perspicere virtutem etiam obrutam corpore, etiam paupertate opposita, etiam humilitate et infamia obiacentibus; cernemus, inquam, pulchritudinem illam quamvis sordido obtectam.*

[32] *Phdr.* 247c-248e. On the *Alcibiades* I, cf. cf. Bartsch (2006:47-55).

[33] For a balanced assessment of Seneca's view of the connection between body and soul, and his Platonic echoes, cf. Smith (2014:343-363).

[34] Cf. *supra,* pp. 34-35, 153.

[35] *Ep.* 120.4-5: *Aliqua benigna facta, aliqua humana, aliqua fortia nos obstupefecerant: haec coepimus tamquam perfecta mirari. Suberant illis multa vitia quae species conspicui alicuius facti fulgorque celabat: haec disimulavimus. Natura iubet augere laudanda, nemo non gloriam ultra verum tulit: ex his ergo speciem ingentis boni traximus.*

in other words, is both natural and providential. In what follows, Seneca makes clear that the models from which we can derive a better moral understanding need not be living persons. Indeed, the *exempla* he mentions are all historical (or perhaps legendary) figures—such as Fabricius and Horatius Cocles—whom he cites not so much as patterns for imitation but, as Brad Inwood puts it, "foil[s] in the analytical process of concept formation."[36] As Ilsetraut Hadot has convincingly argued, this natural admiration for exemplary figures should be interpreted as an expression of the inborn seeds of the virtues (*aphormai*), which Seneca mentions at the beginning of *Letter* 120.[37] We are dazzled by moral *exempla*, in other words, for the same reason that we spontaneously assent to moral *sententiae*: in both cases, Nature has predisposed us to be impressed by them as a way of directing us towards the good, without teaching us directly.[38]

Importantly, Seneca emphasizes in both cases that the feelings of admiration or exaltation we feel when we are confronted with an instantiation of the moral good is only the beginning of the learning process: just as the enthusiastic assent to moral *sententiae* needs to be followed by habituation and by learning the reasons why *sententiae* contain truth, the admiration for moral *exempla* needs to be followed by a process of concept formation and moral habituation until the mind has reached a point "when it is becoming able to guide itself."[39]

3. Exemplarity and the Problem of Moral Motivation

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[36] Inwood (2005:294).

[37] See Hadot 2014:9-41. *Ep.* 120.4: *Hoc nos natura docere non potuit: semina nobis scientiae dedit, scientiam non dedit.* To support her argument, Hadot cites explicit parallels with Cic. *Fin* III.33-34 (= SVF III.72), in which concept formation by analogy is explicitly linked with the seeds of the virtues within us. Surprisingly, Inwood (2005) does not draw this connection, and argues that both Cicero and Seneca fail to explain "the mystery of this inference" of a conception of the good (p. 278).

[38] In light of this, Seneca's repeated claim that the gods (or Nature) have sent us certain individuals as *exempla* of virtues or vices is not merely a rhetorical exaggeration, since he believes Nature purposefully fills us with admiration for exemplary individuals *De Prov.* VI.3: "Why do [good men] suffer certain hardships? It is that they may teach others to endure them they were born to be a pattern"; *De Const.* II.1: "in Cato the immortal gods had given to us a truer exemplar of the wise man than earlier ages had in Ulysses and Hercules".

[39] *Ep.* 94.51.

This brings us to a second aspect of Seneca's use of *exempla.* In several of his works, Seneca emphasizes that the admiration we feel for *exempla* is only beneficial to the extent that it strengthens a person's commitment to the values the *exempla* represent. Just as he criticizes students who respond with admiration and enthusiasm to a philosopher's speech but fail to "carry home the spirit they conceived", Seneca believes that admiration for *exempla* that does not lead to moral action and further philosophical study is not just useless but positively dangerous.[40]

His most explicit warning against this half-hearted enthusiasm for *exempla* can be found in the opening sections of the *De Tranquillitate,* in which Serenus describes his mental vacillation. Serenus's main problem, according to his own self-diagnosis, is a "weakness of mind torn between tendencies, not veering strongly to either what is right or what is perverse"[41]. When something has upset him, Serenus writes, he retreats from all his public commitments and indulges in domestic comforts. When he reads philosophical works, however, he is just as suddenly enthused to break out of his confinement and commit himself to action. As Serenus puts it:

> [W]hen a powerful narrative has aroused my mind and noble examples have spurred me on, I want to jump into the forum, lend my voice to one man and my support to another, trying to do help even if it will will not benefit him at all, and restrain the arrogance of someone wrongly elated by his good fortune."[42]

As Serenus himself indicates, this short-lived and ill-directed enthusiasm to follow in the footsteps of exemplary figures only adds to his confusion and lack of constancy. This lack of consistent moral motivation, exemplified by Serenus, is a problem that Seneca address in several other texts. In *Letter* 98, for example, Seneca encourages Lucilius to employ *exempla* as an instrument of self-command, rehearsing their qualities as he converses with himself:

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[40] *Ep.* 108.7, discussed *supra* in ch. 4.

[41] *Tranq* 1.4: *Haec animi inter utrumque dubii nec ad recta fortiter nec ad prava uergentis infirmitas qualis sit, non tam semel tibi possum quam per partes ostendere.*

[42] *Tranq* 1.12: *Sed ubi lectio fortior erexit animum et aculeos subdiderunt exempla nobilia, prosilire libet in forum, commodare alteri vocem, alteri operam, etiam si nihil profuturam, tamen conaturam prodesse, alicuius coercere [in foro] superbiam male secundis rebus elati.*

> Just say to yourself: "Of all these experiences that seem so terrible, none is unbearable. Many have overcome individual trials: Mucius fire, Regulus crucifixion, Socrates poison, Rutilius exile, Cato, a sword-inflicted death; therefore, let us also overcome something.[43]

Admiration for *exempla,* in other words, is only beneficial if it leads to an ongoing process in which the values represented by exemplary figures are internalized and put to the test. In *Letter* 24, Seneca similarly encourages Lucilius to let his thoughts dwell on different periods in history in order to "gather *exempla* which will strengthen [him]"[44] and to "exhort [himself] against what seems most terrifying".[45] Here, as before, the parallels between Seneca's recommendations for using *exempla* and his recommendations for employing moral *sententiae* are striking. Just as he recommends repeating precepts to oneself as a way of strengthening the soul and inspiring it with trust (*fiducia*), Seneca argues that we should repeatedly redirect our attention to exemplary figures as a way of strengthening our moral motivation and making their values our own.

In *Letter* 104, he further illustrates this by recounting how Socrates and Cato endured hardships and maintained their constancy. Towards the end of his extended narration, Seneca points out why he has described their exemplary lives at length and how he expects Lucilius to respond. As he recounts the hardships Cato faced, Seneca encourages Lucilius to "embrace your heart an image of that time" and to reflect on the challenges Cato faced.[46] Doing so, he believes, will elicit admiration for Cato's strength. As Seneca puts it, "You will marvel (*miraberis*) […] when you

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[43] *Ep.* 98.12: *Dic tibi 'ex istis quae terribilia videntur nihil est invictum'. Singula vicere iam multi, ignem Mucius, crucem Regulus, venenum Socrates, exilium Rutilius, mortem ferro adactam Cato:et nos vincamus aliquid.* As Alan Brinton (1986:252) notes, "there is, in this passage, the move toward a stronger use of examples as a form of argument: we are urged to *follow* them. That a Socrates or Cato acted in a certain way is presented, in effect, as a kind of *reason* for us to do the same".

[44] *Ep.* 24.3: *Nec diu exempla quibus confirmeris colligenda sunt: omnis illa aetas tulit. In quamcumque partem rerum vel civilium vel externarum memoriam miseris, occurrent tibi ingenia aut profectus aut impetus magni.*

[45] *Ep.* 24.9: *Non in hoc exempla nunc congero ut ingenium exerceam, sed ut te adversus id quod maxime terribile videtur exhorter;* cf. *Ep.* 77.10.5: *Sed ne inutilis quidem haec fabella fuerit; saepe enim talia exempla necessitas exigit* (LCL translation modified)

[46] *Ep.* 104.31: *Si animo conplecti volueris illius imaginem temporis, videbis illinc plebem et omnem erectum ad res novas vulgum, hinc optumates et equestrem ordinem, quidquid erat in civitate sancti et electi, duos in medio relictos, rem publicam et Catonem.* (LCL translation modified).

notice 'Atrides and Priam, and Achilles raging at both of them', for Cato is angry with both factions and disarms them both […][47]. Seneca, however, wants to show Lucilius that Cato's exemplary strength is not merely a lofty ideal to be admired, but a realistic model to be emulated.[48] With insistent anaphora (*vides posse*), he stresses that Cato's story shows the real possibility of constancy and moral progress:

> You see how humans can bear hardship […] You see that it is possible to endure thirst […] You see that honor and reputation can be disregarded […] You see that it is possible not to fear the power of stronger men […] You see that death can be despised just like exile."[49]

Seneca concludes by shifting from infinitives to the first person plural, and by stating explicitly that "we can have as much courage against such things as Cato, if we only we are willing to withdraw our neck from the yoke."[50] Wonder and amazement at an exemplary figure's feats of courage or endurance, in other words, are morally beneficial only if they lead to a desire to follow in their footsteps, and a belief that such exemplary conduct is within reach.

Passages such as these shed light on the complex and vital role of the *exemplum* in Seneca's works. Apart from acting as models to help the *proficiens* distinguish between virtues and vices and to form an intellectual conception of the good by analogy, they fulfill a motivational function, illustrating the possibility of living according to Stoic principles and giving us the strength and motivation to follow in their footsteps. As I have shown, however, the "intellectual" and "motivational" dimensions of the Senecan *exemplum* should not be seen as operating separately. Rather, Seneca, clearly indicates how they work in tandem, and how Nature itself has programmed

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[47] *Ep. 104.31:Miraberis, inquam, cum animadverteris Atriden Priamumque et saevom ambobus Achillen; utrumque enim inprobat, utrumque exarmat.* The quotation is from Vergil, *Aen*. I.458.

[48] Cf. *Ep.* 44.3 and *Ep.* 70, in which Seneca warns against the defeatist belief that the exemplary figures of the past are beyond imitation. In *Ep.* 70, he underscores this argument by showing that even gladiators, "the most despised class of men" have been known to act courageously.

[49] *Ep.*104.33: *Vides posse homines laborem pati […] Vides posse tolerari sitim […] Vides honorem et notam posse contemni […] Vides posse non timeri potentiam superiorum […] Vides tam mortem posse contemni quam exilium.*

[50] *Ep* 104. 34: *Possumus itaque adversus ista tantum habere animi, libeat modo subducere iugo collum.*

us to respond to them with admiration in order that we might be motivated to form of a rational conception of the good.

4. Learning from Opposites: Seneca's Negative Role Models

I now wish to turn to the other inborn inclination Seneca operationalizes through *exempla,* namely the concomitant inclination to flee vice. In several texts, in fact, Seneca argues that an aspiring philosopher can make moral progress not only by admiring and emulating *exempla* of virtuous conduct but also by contemplating and denouncing models of vicious behavior.[51] In book III of the *De Ira*, for example, he lists both "exempla to follow," such as Antigonus I Monopthalmus, the merciful diadoch, and "exempla to avoid," such as the cruel Persian king Cambyses.[52] As Motto and Clark have argued, Seneca repeatedly returns to a small number of "exemplary villains"—such as Alexander the Great, Sulla, or Caligula—whom he singles out as "so that human beings would be deterred by their behavior and would shrink from following in their wretched footsteps."[53] To obtain this effect, he employs a variety of rhetorical devices and modes of speech, ranging from vivid metaphors to hyperbole, innuendo and outright sarcasm.[54]

Seneca's *exempla vitiorum*, however, do not merely aim to clarify what vicious behavior is, but are often explicitly designed to repel his readers and exhort them to abandon vicious behavior. Rather than directly telling his addressees that their behavior is disgraceful, Seneca often

[51] In *De Ira* III.22.1, Seneca lists both exempla to follow, such as Antigonus I Monopthalmus, the lenient founder of the Antigonid dynasty, and "exempla to avoid" (*exempla quae vites*), such as the cruel Persian king Cambyses. Clark & Motto (1993) discuss Seneca's "exemplary villains", without much analysis. For more analytical treatments, cf. Limburg (2008) and Wilcox (2008), who focuses on Caligula.

[52] *De Ira* III.22.1: *Et haec cogitanda sunt exempla quae uites, et illa ex contrario quae sequaris, moderata, lenia, quibus nec ad irascendum causa defuit nec ad ulciscendum potestas.*

[53] Motto and Clark (1993:316).

[54] Cf. Motto & Clark (1993: 318).

presents them with a distorted mirror, which shows their own behavior, or the behavior they are at risk of indulging in, in an exaggerated and disgusting light. By doing so, he hopes to elicit a firm dissociation from the behavior embodied by the bad *exemplum,* and an eagerness to follow in the footsteps of the accompanying good *exemplum.* This admonitory strategy is an application of what Robert Kaster has called "*pudor* by association", the shame-script that comes from being associated with a shameful person or group of persons[55]. This approach, in other words, amounts to a kind of aversion therapy, designed to show what wrong behavior looks like and how it leads to shameful consequences.

This form of admonition, which appeals to the reader's feelings of disgust and aversion through graphic descriptions of vicious behavior, was a common therapeutic instrument used in different philosophical schools[56]. In *The Passions of the Soul,* the Platonist Galen writes that "we must observe what is shameful and to be shunned in the instances of those who are caught in the violent grip of these diseases, for in such men the disgrace is clearly seen."[57] In his *On Anger,* the Epicurean Philodemus similarly argues that the catastrophic outcomes of specific emotions need to be put on full display in order to fully impress the reader of their repellent character. The "mere censure of the emotions," which he associates with Chrysippus, is on his view ineffectual. Rather, he argues that "one should visualize the illness; when the shameful consequences of such a vice are put before the eyes of those suffering, they become intent on a cure.[58]

The question remains, however, how Seneca can justify this form of aversion therapy on Stoic grounds. The answer, I believe, can be found, once again, in *Letter* 120, which also pointed

[55] Kaster (2005:38-42). On the notion of emotional scripts, cf. *supra,* pp. 98-99.
[56] Its origins in rhetorical invective and satire are self-evident.
[57] *On The Passions of the Soul* I.7, p. 53, cited and discussed in Alexander (2008:177).
[58] Philodemus, *On Anger*, cols. 1.21-27; 3.13; 4.15-16 Indelli, cf. Glad (1995:119) and Alexander (2008:178 n.6). On the unfairness of this criticism, cf. *supra,* ch.1, pp. 39-41.

to a theoretical justification of Seneca's endorsement of the enthusiasm and admiration we feel when confronted with virtuous *exempla.* Immediately after discussing such positive role-models, Seneca adds that bad deeds "have sometimes presented us with the appearance of the honorable, and what is best has shone forth from its opposite."[59] This strategy of arguing from opposites is consonant with the early Stoic belief that moral concepts can be formed through their opposites (*kat' enantiôsin*).[60] As John Tarrant has argued, this approach is particularly useful in light of the scarcity of virtuous examples in the actual world we live in, which Seneca laments earlier on in the letter and in many of his other works.[61] If we can find a way to deduce moral lessons from vicious examples as well as from virtuous ones, our opportunities for moral learning are suddenly vastly expanded. In addition, a realistic, compelling portrayal of negative examples can help us to distinguish between virtues and vices, which often appear similar at first sight.[62]

Arguably the most frequent and dramatic *exemplum* of vice in Seneca's is that of the emperor Caligula, who – Seneca speculates – was "produced by nature […] to demonstrate what supreme vice allied to supreme power was capable of."[63] In his *Consolation to Polybius*, Seneca holds up Caligula's behavior as the very antithesis of what Polybius should be doing:

> Having lost his sister Drusilla, Gaius Caesar, a man who could no more indulge his grief than his pleasure in manner worthy of an emperor, fled the sight and company of his fellow men, did not attend the funeral of his sister, did not pay the ordinary tributes to his sister but tried to relieve his distress at her deeply regretted death with dice [...] and other

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[59] *Ep.* 120.8: *Sunt enim, ut scis, virtutibus vitia confinia, et perditis quoque ac turpibus recti similitudo est: sic mentitur prodigus liberalem, cum plurimum intersit utrum quis dare sciat an servare nesciat.* Seneca mentions this immediately after describing how humans are naturally led to the admiration of virtuous *exempla* (cf. *supra,* p. 166).

[60] *D.L.* 7.53 = SVF 2.87. Cf Pohlenz (1940:87), Wilcox (2008:456), and Inwood (2005:288)

[61] Tarrant (2006:9-10) argues that Seneca's penchant for such "graphic depictions of immoral or foolish behavior" stems from the fact that "wickedness is often more compelling than virtuous behavior, perhaps because most human beings have more direct experience of the former than of the latter".

[62] Cf. *Ep.* 95.66, discussed *supra*, pp.46-7, 163, in which Seneca advocates a form of admonition named *ethologia*, which "presents the signs and marks of each virtue and in order that "similar conditions can be told apart".

[63] *Ad Helv* X.4: *quem mihi videtur rerum natura edidisse ut ostenderet quid summa vitia in summa fortuna possent*. Cf. *Ad Pol.* XVII.3: *quem rerum natura in exitium opprobriumque humani generis edidit*", and Wilcox (2008:456).

> common entertainments of this sort at his villa at Alba. What a disgrace to the Empire! The dice was the solace of a Roman emperor mourning his sister![64]

Seneca concludes the long description of Caligula's disgraceful behavior with an explicit admonition to Polybius not to "to divert his sorrow by untimely amusements, or to encourage it by disgraceful neglect and squalor, or to seek relief by that most inhuman of consolations, the causing of suffering to others."[65]

It is important to note at this point that the disgust Seneca wants the reader to feel when confronted with vivid examples of Caligula's monstrous behavior, is not the unreflective feeling of disgust she might feel when confronted with, for example, a putrefying piece of flesh. As Robert Kaster has rightly noted, we should distinguish between two common forms of the Roman notion of *fastidium,* typically translated as disgust: a "per se" reflex that stems from a basic sensation of physical disgust brought about by the recognition of a contaminant, and a "deliberative-ranking form" which responds to a consideration of "the relative value or status of two or more things." When Seneca aims to elicit revulsion at Caligula's vices, we are clearly talking about this second form, since our reaction stems from a comparison of his behavior with that behavior we expect from an emperor, or indeed any decent human being.[66]

The deliberate provocation of disgust in passages such as the above, in other words, aim to initiate a process of reflection that will go beyond our immediate response of despising Caligula

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[64] *Ad Pol.* XVII.4, *C. Caesar amissa sorore Drusilla, is homo qui non magis dolere quam gaudere prin- cipaliter posset, conspectum conversationemque ciuium suorum profugit, exequiis sororis suae non interfuit, iusta sorori non praestitit, sed in Albano suo tesseris ac foro †et pervocatis et† huiusmodi aliis occupationibus acerbissimi funeris eleuabat mala. Pro pudor imperii! Principis Romani lugentis sororem alea solacium fuit!*

[65] *Ad Pol.* XVII.6: *Procul istud exemplum ab omni Romano sit uiro, luctum suum aut intempestivis avocare lusibus aut sordium ac squaloris foeditate inritare aut alienis malis oblectare minime humano solacio.*

[66] As Kaster (2005: 124) rightly notes, this second, deliberative kind of disgust is often described in bodily terms; when this happens, however our reaction of deliberative-ranking disgusts merely "rides piggy-back" upon the per se reaction. As Kaster puts it, "a person must first be deliberately ranked as no better than a bug for the response of *fastidium* to occur".

and yield well-considered *reasons* why Caligula's behavior is wrong[67]. As Teun Tieleman argues, Seneca's "repellent descriptions of emotional people" are primarily meant as "preventive measures," aimed to show his readers the moral inappropriateness of certain types of behavior.[68] After this initial reaction of disgust the reader can proceed, as Seneca outlines in *Letter* 120, to contrast the vicious example's behavior with her pre-existing notions of virtuous behavior, a cognitive process that will help her to develop a fleshed-out conception of the moral good, based on experience and reflection. In sum, Seneca's negative *exampla* both aim to instill revulsion for objectionable behaviors, activating his addressees' inborn aversion from vice, and to jumpstart a process of deliberative ranking and reflection on the reasons why such repulsive behaviors are bad.

5. Contrasting Exempla: The Good and the Bad

Seneca typically mobilizes vicious *exempla* as isolated targets of scorn. In a few texts however, he enhances their effectiveness by pairing them with virtuous counterparts. This approach not only highlights the contrast between virtuous and vicious behavior but also aims to simultaneously elicit admiration for the virtuous character and a firm disapproval of its counterpart. In the consolation to Marcia, for instance, Seneca presents this moral crossroads in a particularly vivid way, by confronting her with two opposing examples of how renowned women in the recent past dealt with

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[67] Cf. Nussbaum (2010:210-212) who uses Kaster's analysis of *fastidium* to help explain Seneca's stance on disgust in the *Apocolocyntosis.* As she points out, disgust, while an emotion, "contains a first movement in the direction of Stoicism" by motivating a person to separate him/her-self from evil.

[68] See Tieleman (2003:179). Cf. Limburg (2008:444), who argues that Seneca's descriptions of vicious *exempla,* such as Hostius Quadra, should be understood as a form of protreptic teaching, and Staley (2010:81), who argues that the shock and revulsion aroused by Seneca's depictions of moral evil in his tragedies "serve, […] not to teach an audience but to make it feel" and rightly points out, however, that this revulsion is "only the first step in the cognitive process". Cf. also De Lacy (1958:270), who argues that the Stoics considered poetry, which "deters from vice by examples of evil and provides good examples for imitation" as "a kind of preparation for philosophy", designed to draw in the uninitiated by instilling fear and pleasure respectively.

the loss of their children: Octavia's grief after the death of her son Marcellus and the empress Livia's after the death of her son Drusus:[69]

> I will put two examples before your eyes, the greatest of your sex and and of your time: the first, of a woman who surrendered herself to grief and was carried away by it; the second, of one who, while afflicted by a similar misfortune, and a greater loss, did not allow her ills to keep hold of her for long but quickly restored her mind to its normal state.[70]

Seneca describes how Octavia moaned and wept, totally avoided all human contact, and rejected any form of consolation. Livia, on the other hand, properly subdued her grief, continued performing her official duties, and publicly honored the memory of her son. After vividly illustrating the contrast between the two women's different responses to their loss and its consequences, Seneca concludes by emphasizing's Marcia's agency:

> Choose, then, which of these two examples you consider more praiseworthy. If you wish to follow the first one, you […] will show that you are unwilling to live and unable to die – a condition that is most disgraceful and foreign to your character, which is known for leaning toward the better course of action. If, on the other hand, you adopt the example of the other illustrious woman, who is more restrained and gentler, you will not dwell in sorrow or torture yourself with worries. You will display the uprightness and modesty of character in this matter that you have maintained throughout your life. For there is a modesty even in grieving.[71]

Seneca's explicit connection between Livia's praiseworthy behavior and Octavia's shameful behavior, as well as his judgment that Octavia's behavior is utterly foreign to Marcia's own

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[69] Still, as Shelton (1995) argues, Seneca does not draw a simplistic dichotomy. He acknowledges Octavia's generally virtuous behavior, and does not represent Livia's calm as a superhuman form of Stoic *apatheia*. It is precisely this nuanced description, which creates a possibility of identification and empathy with both cases that shapes the effectiveness of their opposition by presenting moral progress as a real possibility, rather than an impossibly lofty ideal. As Wagoner (2011:129) notes: "Marcia needs to be shocked out of her current state before reason can take hold". *Pace* Wilson (1999, 2013), this is a calculated shock, intended as a moral wake-up call.

[70] *Ad Marc.* II.2 : *Duo tibi ponam ante oculos maxima et sexus et saeculi tui exempla: alterius feminae quae se tradidit ferendam dolori, alterius quae pari adfecta casu, maiore damno, non tamen dedit longum in se malis suis dominium, sed cito animum in sedem suam reposuit.*

[71] *Ad Marc*. III.3-4 : *Elige itaque utrum exemplum putes probabilius. Si illud prius sequi vis, […] quod turpissimum alienissimumque est animo tuo in meliorem noto partem, ostendes te vivere nolle, mori non posse. [...] Si ad hoc maximae feminae te exemplum adplicueris moderatius, mitius, non eris in aerumnis nec te tormentis macerabis […] quam in omni vita servasti morum probitatem et verecundiam, in hac quoque re praestabis; est enim quaedam et dolendi modestia.*

character, are rhetorical moves that urge Marcia to follow in *Livia's* footsteps, at the risk of putting herself in a shameful position.[72] This attribution of shameful behavior to Octavia, rather than to Marcia herself, can be read as a face-saving strategy, which allows Seneca to offer criticism without directly shaming his friend: it is entirely up to her, after all, to make the decision whether to follow Octavia's bad *exemplum*, and be associated with its shameful behavior, or to follow Livia's virtuous precedent and be deserving of admiration.[1]

In addition, Seneca's explicit statement that he has "no doubt that you will be more impressed by the example of Julia Augusta" clearly indicates that Seneca hiself will be disappointed in her if she fails to be impressed by Livia's behavior and appalled by Octavia's.[73] By mentioning Marcia's friendship with Livia, Seneca even symbolically invokes *her* judging presence and encourages Marcia not to disappoint her friend's expectation.[74] Seneca's methodical comparison between Octavia's grief and Livia's, then, not only lays out alternative possibilities for Marcia in a way that urges her to rethink the notion that her grief is inevitable and appropriate, but also emotionally nudges her to follow Livia's example by portraying Octavia's grief in disagreeable terms and by evoking the specter of shame, should she fail to live up to the challenge Seneca presents.

6. The Risks of Teaching through Negative Exempla

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[72] *Pace* Wagoner (2011:93-4), who that the examples of Livia and Octavia are not designed to elicit emotions but simply aim to present alternatives to reason. *Modestia* is closely related to *pudor*; cf. *OLD* s.v. *modestia.* Cf. *Ep.* 99.21 in which Seneca similarly warns Marullus that "there is a comeliness even in grief (*dolendi decor*)".

[73] *Ad Marc.* IV.1: *Non dubito quin Iuliae Augustae, quam familiariter coluisti, magis tibi placeat exemplum.* Cf. *Ep*. 99 (discussed *supra*, p.120), in which Seneca rhetorically presumes Marullus' support in his argument against Metrodorus.

[74] As Abel (1967:31-2) has noted, Seneca's mention of Marcia's friendship with Livia further adds to the personal dimension of this pair of examples

Teaching virtue through the portrayal of vice, however, can be a risky undertaking. Since Seneca's philosophical writings address individuals who have not yet attained wisdom, there is a risk that they will be enthralled, rather than repelled by examples of vicious behavior. As Gareth Williams puts it in his monograph on Seneca's *Natural Questions* "the deviants who infest the work amount to a formidable, perhaps even an overwhelming, body of opposition to the claims of the philosophical life."[75] Scholars of both Seneca's philosophical works and his tragedies have even suggested that Seneca himself displayed a certain morbid fascination with his evil *exempla.*[76] Franz Kühnen, for example, has argued that Seneca wavers in his assessment of whether the educational potential of *exempla fugienda* outweighs its drawbacks.[77] On Kühnen's reading, Seneca argues in the *De Ira* that such *exempla* should be considered, whereas in *Letter* 104, he urges Lucilius to stay away from them entirely. Upon careful examination, however, *Letter* 104 does not exhort Lucilius to stop contemplating *exempla* of vicious behavior, but to refrain from associating with *real-life* individuals who represent vices such as greed and cruelty.[78] Thus when Seneca encourages Lucilius to "cross over to better examples," he wants Lucilius to switch his allegiances not from vicious *exempla* to virtuous ones, but from his corrupted contemporaries to the exemplary men of the past.

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75 Williams (2012:11-12).

76 As Leitao (1998:128) puts it: "If the grotesque and perverse in Senecan tragedy is meant to teach in this way (and I have my doubts), it is an inherently dangerous strategy, for the 'student' could just as easily develop a fascination for the perversions he sees or reads as feel repugnance for them.". Williams (2012:11) asks "can we also detect in the portrayal of at least certain vicious types… a blend of revulsion and yet fascination...?" Schiesaro (2003) offers the most thorough affirmation of this supposition, arguing that Atreus in Seneca's *Thyestes* is not merely a repellent villain but a canny and calculating agent who is in many ways superior to the other characters in the play. Cf. also Hine (2003:90) and Bartsch (2006:103-115), who discusses the moral ambiguity in Seneca's account of Hostius Quadra, and argues that it provides us with a sobering counter-example to the philosophical notion that observing oneself necessarily leads to self-transformation.

77 Kühnen (1962:48).

78 Seneca calls such companions (cf. *Ep.* 104.20: *comem, comitem*) "examples of vices" (*vitiorum exempl[a]*) in light of the fact that they represent particular vices. He cites the *avarus,* the *corruptur, saevus* and *fraudulentus* as examples of such types of companions.

Even as modern critics worry about the potential moral ambiguities in his descriptions of vicious behavior, Seneca himself appears to join the apparent consensus view among ancient rhetoricians that vivid descriptions of vicious behavior can adequately orient their readers' moral responses.[79] Strabo, for example, states without further ado that a pleasant *mythos* produces in the audience an impulse towards that particular behavior, while a frightening *mythos* exercises a deterring effect.[80] Seneca too repeatedly indicates that he expects his addressees and readers to be affected as he intends, and subtly inserts pointers to steer their interpretation in the right direction, ostensibly expecting that such clues will be sufficient to counteract any potential ambiguity.

As we have already seen, he concludes his comparison of Julia and Octavia in the *Consolation to Marcia* with the confident conclusion that *"*no doubt you will be more impressed by the example of Julia Augusta". The story of Hostius Quadra in the *Natural Questions,* often cited as an example of Seneca's fascination with the ingenuity of evildoers, is similarly framed as an explicit moral lesson about the effect of unbridled lust. In Seneca's own words, the moral of the story is that unbridled lust "does not disdain any means of stimulating pleasure and applies its ingenuity to encouraging its own madness."[81] To prevent the lesson from being misunderstood, Seneca not only depicts Hostius' vices in a grotesque, exaggerated fashion, but repeatedly interjects his own reactions in the description, signaling his disgust as he narrates Hostius' perverted exploits, and explicitly calling him a "monster who ought to have been torn to pieces by his own mouth."[82] Seneca's tragedies, while outside the scope of this dissertation, similarly contain

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[79] As Ruth Webb 1997:121) has noted, "the authors of [ancient rhetorical] treatises tend to speak as if the impact of vivid speech were entirely unproblematic, and as if the audience were bound to be affected as described."

[80] *Geographica* I.2.8: τοῖς τε γὰρ παισὶ προσφέρομεν τοὺς ἡδεῖς μύθους εἰς προτροπήν, εἰς ἀποτροπὴν δὲ τοὺς φοβερούς. Cf. Schiesaro (2003:231).

[81] *N.Q.* I.16.1: *Hoc loco volo tibi narrare fabellam, ut intellegas quam nullum instrumentum irritandae voluptatis libido contemnat et ingeniosa sit ad incitandum furorem suum.*

[82] *N.Q.* I.16.3: *Foeda dictu sunt quae portentum illud ore suo lancinandum dixerit feceritque.* Cf. Limburg (2009:444, 447) who argues that descriptions of vicious characters such as Hostius Quadra belong to a paraenetic genre and should be understood as a form of protreptic teaching. She does not, however, extend this interpretation to the

explicit moral flags guiding the reader's moral reactions, as Elizabeth Asmis and others have pointed out[83].

Seneca's apparent confidence that his readers would not misread such negative examples and find something not just perversely fascinating but positively appealing in them may be primarily a product of the rhetorical tradition he was raised in. But it is also possible to detect a specifically Stoic influence here, particularly in his belief that all but the most corrupted human beings are inherently capable of recognizing and denouncing blatantly vicious behavior.[84]

7. Senecan Prosopopoetics

To support a philosophical engagement with the *exempla* he invokes, Seneca often allows his *exempla* to speak directly to the *proficiens* in the form of extended *prosopopoeiai*—speeches that are put in the mouth of particular individuals.[85] As John Tarrant puts it, such *prosopopoeiai* represent "an attempt on Seneca's part to give virtue a human voice, or, in other words, to capture for virtuous characters some of the immediacy and rhetorical power that Seneca deploys so effectively in his portraits of the diseased and the deranged."[86]

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vicious characters in Seneca's tragedies, a genre that, on her view, allows for greater moral ambiguity (447).

83 Asmis (unpublished manuscript, p. 12) argues that Seneca guides the reactions of his tragedies' readers by "tak[ing] pains to highlight the disruption produced by evil in the world" and by "add[ing] a running moral commentary, spoken by some of the characters in the play". Similarly, Norman Pratt (1983:128-9) argues that the main goal of Seneca's tragedies is "to dramatize positive and negative exempla of philosophy in which Virtue and Vice are absolutely opposed" and that he repeatedly breaks the dramatic illusion "to keep the hearer informed about the nature and significance of the exempla through constant specific foreshadowing and pervasive imagery".

84 Cf. *Ep*. 108.8-9, discussed *supra*, pp. 143-44.

85 The *Rhetorica Ad Herrenium* (IV.66) defines *proposopoeia* (*conformatio*) as a way of "representing an absent person as present, or in making a mute thing or one lacking form articulate, and attributing to it a definite form and a language or a certain behavior appropriate to its character".

86 Tarrant (2006:13). Cf. Hutchinson (1994:43) who notes that Seneca's employment of "other minds" is "often used to sharpen the personal edge in the presentation of his own thought and outlook".

In his use of *prosopopoeia*, Seneca borrows from a long line of rhetoricians who used this device in an effort to make their arguments appeal to their audience's emotions. Ancient rhetorical handbooks recognized that *prosopopoeia* could personalize a writer's point and add dramatic effect to his words.[87] Demetrius of Phaleron, for example, writes that *proposopoeia* "may be used to produce force" and "makes the passage much more lively and forceful, or rather it really turns into drama."[88] Other rhetoricians explicitly point out that *prosopoeiai* derives their vividness from the fact that they appeal to the emotions. Cicero, for instance, describes the "introduction of imaginary characters" among the figures of thought that are "particularly well suited for winning over the audience's mind" and for "stirring their emotions."[89] Quintilian concurs with this and points out that *prosopoeiai* are especially effective in situations where the speaker wants to offer "words of advice, reproach, complaint, praise or pity"[90]. Longinus adds that the switch from a first-person narration to the impersonation of another character not only brings about "a sort of outbreak of emotion", but also helps to focus the reader's attention[91].

In his use of *prosopopoeia*, then, Seneca appropriates and customizes a technique that was well developed in the rhetorical tradition. Scholars commenting on Seneca's *prosopopoeiai*, however, rarely address the fact that the emotional power of *prosopoeiai*, emphasized by

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87 On the effect of *enargeia* associated with *prosopopoeiai,* cf. Dross (2011:225-43) who remarks on the effect it has on memory, thought and motivation. On the rhetorical function of *auctoritas* cf. *Ad Marc*. II.1, XXVI.1. As Pierini (1997:229-230) notes, Cicero too often invokes the *auctoritas* of the consoler himself as a consoling power.

88 Demetrius, *On Style* 265-66:: σχῆμα διανοίας πρὸς δεινότητα … πολὺ γὰρ ἐνεργέστερα καὶ δεινότερα φαίνεται ὑπὸ τῶν προσώπων, μᾶλλον δὲ δράματα ἀτεχνῶς γίνεται.

89 *De Or.* III.205: *Morum ac vitae imitatio vel in personis vel sine illis, magnum quoddam ornamentum orationis et aptum ad animos conciliandos vel maxime, saepe autem etiam ad commovendos; personarum ficta inductio vel gravissimum lumen augendi.*

90 *Inst. Or* IV.1.28: *[I]n epilogo vero liceat totos effundere adfectus, et fictam orationem induere personis et defunctos excitare et pignora reorum producere: quae minus in exordiis sunt usitata;* IX.2.30: *His … suadendo, obiurgando, querendo, laudando, miserando personas idoneas damus (cf.* III.8.54).

91 *De Subl.* 26-27: πάντα δὲ τὰ τοιαῦτα πρὸς αὐτὰ ἀπερειδόμενα τὰ πρόσωπα ἐπ' αὐτῶν ἵστησι τὸν ἀκροατὴν τῶν ἐνεργουμένων. Καὶ ὅταν ὡς οὐ πρὸς ἅπαντας, ἀλλ' ὡς πρὸς μόνον τινὰ λαλῇς ἐμπαθέστερόν τε αὐτὸν ἅμα καὶ προσεκτικώτερον καὶ ἀγῶνος ἔμπλεων ἀποτελέσεις, ταῖς εἰς ἑαυτὸν προσφωνήσεσιν ἐξεγειρόμενον. Ἔτι γε μὴν ἔσθ' ὅτε περὶ προσώπου διηγούμενος ὁ συγγραφεὺς ἐξαίφνης παρενεχθεὶς εἰς τὸ αὐτὸ πρόσωπον ἀντιμεθίσταται, καὶ ἔστι τὸ τοιοῦτον εἶδος ἐκβολή τις πάθους·

theoreticians such as Cicero and Longinus, could be regarded as problematic from a Stoic point of view.[92] On the other hand, scholars who do discuss the emotional impact of *prosopopoeiai* in Seneca's works hardly go beyond suggesting that he aims to address both reason and the emotions—without specifying which emotions are at play or addressing the fact that, in Stoicism, reason and emotion are not two distinct states. Armisen-Marchetti, for example, omits the underlying psychological and philosophical questions, and merely notes that Seneca's *proposopeiai* bring about "an affective and sensible contact with the ideal." With this kind of rhetoric, she argues, Seneca moves "beyond the logical phase," using images not as a way of illustrating ideas but as "another form, or another mode of thought, connected with the emotions and the will." [93] In what follows, Armisen-Marchetti does mention the rational, logical function of personification, and its ability to clarify the truth through imagery, without however explaining the connection between its "logical" and its "affective" components.[94]

To show in a more comprehensive and consistent way how emotional appeals and Stoic instruction work in tandem in Seneca's *prosopopoeiai,* I will now turn to two examples, drawn again from his *Consolations,* in which Seneca appeals to his addressees' existing attachments but simultaneously nudges them towards a Stoic point of view. Perhaps the most striking and direct application of a *prosopopoeia* as a therapeutic tool can be found in his *Consolation to Marcia*.

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[92] As Pierre Grimal (1991:241-3) has pointed out, most of the older scholarship discusses "digressions" such as *prosopopoeiai* primarily as stylistic embellishments, ignoring their rhetorical and philosophical point. Grimal himself approaches apparent "digressions" such as Seneca's *prosopopoeiai* as a tool calculated to bring about a "creative shock" and to "bring the human condition to life within the context of the universe as a whole".

[93] Armisen-Marchetti (1989:256), my translation. *Il s'agit, par un contact affectif et sensible avec l'ideal,de faire aimer le dogme, de suciter l'eélan vers les valeurs sans lequel il n'y aurait pas d'engagement moral. Nous sommes ici en-deca, ou à coté, de la phase logique: l'image n'est pas une illustration de l'ideée, comme une vignette accompagnant le raisonnement, elle est une autre forme, ou un autre moment, de la pensée, lie à l'affectiviteé et à la volonté.*

[94] Armisen-Marchetti (1989:258). Cf. also Hutchinson (1994:156), who writes that Senecan *prosopopoeiai* are "often intended to make an emotional as well as an intellectual impact" and Wilson (2007:434), who merely notes that Seneca's personifications are "designed to involve the reader emotionally as well as intellectually".

Towards the end of the *Consolation*, Seneca invokes Marcia's father Cremutius Cordus, to whom she had been extraordinarily attached, and cautions her:[95]

> Always act as if you were placed beneath the eyes of your father and son, not as you once knew them, but as far loftier beings, now dwelling in the heavens. Blush to think any mean or common thought and to shed tears for your loved ones who have been changed for the better.[96]

The introduction to the *prosopopoeia* makes it clear that Seneca is donning Cordus' *persona* as a way of borrowing his *auctoritas* and adding further weight to his consolatory arguments in closing. It further makes clear that he wants the speech to have a visual and auditory effect, enhancing its usefulness as an instrument of *meditatio*:[97]

> Imagine, therefore, Marcia, that your father, who had as much influence on you as you had on your son, speaks these words from that citadel in the heavens, no longer using the tone in which he lamented the civil wars and proscribed the proscribers, for all time, but a more exalted one, appropriate to his more sublime condition[98].

In the *prosopopoeia* that follows, Cordus rehearses many of the arguments Seneca has already given: that Marcia should not think about her son's death as a disaster and should not let herself be dominated by her sorrow; that there is no point in rebelling against *Fortuna*, who lays low even kings and generals; that in death there is more peace than in life. The Cremutius Cordus speech ends with a panoramic view of the cosmos in which Seneca surveys the great cycle of life in its manifold manifestations, raising and razing kingdoms and cities, and even mountains and seas.[99]

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[95] Marcia's extraordinary devotion to her father is detailed in I.1-4.

[96] *Ad Marc.* XXV.3: *Sic itaque te, Marcia, gere, tamquam sub oculis patris filique posita, non illorum quos noveras, sed tanto excelsiorum et in summo locatorum. Erubesce quicquam humile aut vulgare <cogitare> et mutatos in melius tuos flere.*

[97] Speeches by imaginary viewers could act as an object of *meditatio,* offering consolatory arguments to be internalized. As Hine (2010:209) notes, "Good Stoics are constantly talking to themselves, and saying the right things to themselves".

[98] *Ad Marc.* XXVI.1: *Puta itaque ex illa arce caelesti patrem tuum, Marcia, cui tantum apud te auctoritatis erat quantum tibi apud filium tuum, non illo ingenio quo civilia bella deflevit, quo proscribentis in aeternum ipse proscripsit, sed tanto elatiore quanto est ipse sublimior dicere.*

[99] The rhetoric of this grand finale is to a certain extent anticipated by an earlier, two-part prosopopoeia, in which Seneca first offers an *ekphrasis*, offered by a person advising a hypothetical travel to Sicily, on the rewards and dangers of this trip (*Ad Marc.* XVII), followed by a personification of *Natura,* reassuring humanity that "I deceive no one". He concludes this rhetorical arrangement with another *ekphrasis*, in which he applies the lessons learned

This closing argument, with its references to the Stoic theory of conflagration and renewal is designed to instill a *sub specie aeternitatis* view, from which Marcia's sorrows will seem passing and insignificant.[100]

Marcia, in other words, ought to be awed by the workings of this Stoic cosmos, rather than distressed at the way it impacts her own concerns. She should feel ashamed to see the world merely through the lens of her own sorrows. Seeing her situation in such a petty way, concerned with earthly possessions and transient relationships, Cordus implies, would be a form of "discreditable retraction of the self" – in Robert Kaster's terns – that amounts to a denial of her proper position in a larger, well-ordered world[101]. Such an argument may seem out of touch, even cruel, to a reader who does not endorse the Stoic view of the universe. But for a person who is favorably inclined to the conception of a providential cosmos, the argument that we are parts of a benign order could arguably be an inspiring and even consoling thought.[102]

8. The Internalized Exemplum

by the travel to Sicily to a person's "entrance into the whole of life", ending with the question whether Marcia will accept that to "arrive at those marvels, you must pass through these dangers".

[100] Scholars have often noted the Platonic undertones in Cremutius' speech and the parallels with Cicero's *Somnium Scipionis* (cf. Manning 1981:133-35). As Smith (2014:357) notes, "the notion of the soul actively 'leaving' the body may be a reflection of Seneca's metaphysical conceptions of the soul as a portion of the divine: it is an active, vigorous entity always in motion, striving to return to the place from which it descended" (357). Similarly, Smith notes that the notion of the soul's purgation that is presented in this speech is described as "a preparation for an extended afterlife, and not for rebirth" and echoes the Stoic notion of *ekpyrosis*, the universe's final conflagration. On the Stoic theory of *ekpurosis*, cf. Long and Sedley (1987:274-70). On "the cosmic view" as a spiritual exercise, cf. Hadot (1995:238-50).

[101] Kaster (2005:47-8), discussed *supra* pp. 64, 99, 109, 120-23, 128, 184.

[102] On the "external perspective" of Stoic *eudaimonia, cf.* Long (2001: 179-201, esp. 189ff.) and Kamtekar (1998:153), who notes that Epictetus' frequent reminders to his students that they are "a co-citizen of the world along with the gods, capable of adopting the viewpoint of Zeus" serve to "raise our self-image, make us think more highly of ourselves" and "give us a self-conception to live up to in our actions"

Seneca repeatedly argues that *exempla* should be used to counter the misguided values of society. As such, they represent an imaginary community of moral companions, countering corruption and protecting the *proficiens* from alluring illusions. To highlight how crucial this is, Seneca underscores that we are already, unreflectively following social role models—which he terms exempla—and that it is our own responsibility to select truly exemplary role models that will effectively contribute to our moral growth. In *Letter* 123, for example, he laments that we often go wrong by mindlessly following our neighbors. "Many of our troubles," he argues "may be explained from the fact that we live according to a pattern (*exemplum*) and, instead of arranging our lives according to reason, are led astray by convention."[103]

Seneca exhorts Lucilius to apply careful scrutiny even to behaviors that are widely praised. As he puts it in *Letter* 94, "we must unravel all such cases (*exempla*) that are forced before our eyes and crammed into our ears; we must clear out our hearts, for they are full of evil talk."[104] In *Letter* 104, he similarly warns of the dangers of associating with vicious role models: "The miser, the swindler, the bully, the cheat, will do you much harm; if they are near you, they are within you," he writes. "If you want to be stripped of your faults, you must leave behind the patterns (*exempla*) of the faults" and "cross over to the better ones."[105]

Given the scarcity of true *exempla* in his own day, Seneca repeatedly suggests that Lucilius should "live with" *exempla* from the past:

Live with the Catos, with Laelius, with Tubero. And if you also enjoy associating with

[103] *Ep.* 123.6: *Inter causas malorum nostrorum est quod vivimus ad exempla, nec ratione componimur sed consuetudine abducimur.* Cf. Letter 7, in which Seneca warns Lucilius that "a bad example reacts on the agent" and encourages him to "associate with those who will make a better man of you" (*Ep* 7.5-9). Cf. further *De Vita Beata,* I.3, *De Ira* III.10.3, *Ep.* 99.16-17 and *Ep.* 114.19.

[104] *Ep.* 94.68: *Omnia ista exempla quae oculis atque auribus nostris ingeruntur retexenda sunt, et plenum malis sermonibus pectus exhauriendum*

[105] *Ep.* 104.21: *Si velis vitiis exui, longe a vitiorum exemplis recedendum est. Avarus, corruptor, saevus, fraudulentus, multum nocituri si prope a te fuissent, intra te sunt.*

> Greeks, keep company with Socrates and Zeno; the former will teach you to die if it is necessary, the other to die before it is necessary. Live with Chrysippus, with Posidonius: they will pass on to you the knowledge of things human and divine, they will urge you to put things in practice and not just speak cleverly and throw out phrases to delight your audience, but strengthen your soul and rouse it against threats.[106]

As this passage and similar ones make clear, the help we should look for in contemplating *exempla* from the past consists of two complementary elements: the acquisition of moral knowledge, and the exhortation to put that knowledge into practice in everyday life[107]. In *Letter* 62, for example, Seneca reports that he himself likes to spend his time "in the company of all the best" and lets his thoughts go to them "no matter in what lands they may have lived, or in what age." Thus, he "carries around" the great Cynic Demetrius wherever he goes and often "converses with him, half-naked as he is."[108] The vocabulary of companionship and conversation in passages such as these may at first seem to imply a reciprocal relationship among equals. In *Letter* 94, however, Seneca argues that an internalized exemplum should act as a "guardian" or a "pleader of the right mind" who can admonish Lucilius and help him resist the "counselors of madness" all around him.[109] This guardian should always "stand near us" and "pluck us continually by the ear, dispel rumors and protest against popular fads"[110]

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[106] *Ep.* 104.21-22: *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 necesseerit, 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.*

[107] In *De Otio* I.1, he similarly advises Serenus to "retire to the society of the best men and to select some model by which we may direct our own lives". In *Letters* 52.7 and 102.30, he similarly argues that the memory of an exemplary person can be just as helpful as a living counselor.

[108] *Ep.* 62.2-3: *cum optimo quoque sum; ad illos, in quocumque loco, in quocumque saeculo fuerunt, animum meum mitto.* Demetrium, virorum optimum, ecum circumfero et relictis conchyliatis cum illo seminude loquor, illum admiror. On Seneca's admiration for Demetrius, cf. Billerbeck.

[109] *Ep.* 94.59: *Necessarium itaque admoneri est, habere aliquem advocatum bonae mentis et in tanto fremitu tumultuque falsorum unam denique audire vocem;* 69: *Magna pars sanitatis est hortatores insaniae reliquisse et ex isto coitu invicem noxio procul abisse.*

[110] *Ep.* 94.55: *Sit ergo aliquis custos et aurem subinde pervellat abigatque rumores et reclamet populis laudantibus;* 59-60: *Necessarium itaque admoneri est, habere aliquem advocatum bonae mentis et in tanto fremitu tumultuque falsorum unam denique audire vocem. Quae erit illa vox? Ea scilicet quae tibi tantis clamoribus ambitionis exsurdato salubria insusurret verba, quae dicat: non est quod invideas istis quos magnos felicesque populus vocat;* 72: *Itaque si in medio urbium fremitu conlocati sumus, stet ad latus monitor et contra laudatores ingentium*

This approach of watching oneself through the eyes of an exemplary other redeploys a mechanism of self-evaluation that was an ingrained part of the Roman aristocrat's mindset.[111] As Carlin Barton argues, the socialization of Roman aristocrats depended on "the ability, the willingness to be awed or intimated by others," especially by individuals "with whom one wished to be associated or identified."[112] As such, she rightly points out that integrity was paradoxically conceived as "form of self-splitting," which resulted in a constant self-monitoring as well as in a nagging fear of being exposed and shamed.[113] Seneca takes up this form of community-oriented self-evaluation and adapts it to his own philosophical concerns and goals.[114] By encouraging Lucilius to adopt an imaginary, exemplary viewer rather than the judgment of his social peers as a moral benchmark, he ensures that Lucilius' self-monitoring will reflect Stoic values, rather than the misguided values of Roman society.

But even as Seneca shifts the locus of authority from a community of contemporaries to a self-selected *exemplum* from the distant past, he makes it clear that he expects Lucilius to be *ashamed* in front of this imaginary observer if he fails to measure up, just as he would in front of his social peers. He does so especially in *Letters* 11 and 25, in which he urges Lucilius to adopt an

patrimoniorum laudet parvo divitem et usu opes metientem. Contra illos qui gratiam ac potentiam attollunt otium ipse suspiciat traditum litteris et animum ab externis ad sua reversum.

[111] As both Matthew Roller (2001:84-5) and Shadi Bartsch (2006-194-5) point out, Seneca's metaphors for practices of self-evaluation are often derived from traditional community-oriented modes of evaluation.

[112] Barton (2001:203, 207).

[113] Cf. Barton (2001:217): Self-control, insofar as it required constant and critical self-scrutiny, combined in constant tension the constraining and stimulating aspect of shame. Cf. also Kaster (2005:18), who argues that the Roman concern with *verecundia* resulted in a "constant self-monitoring"

[114] As Alan Brinton (1986:255) correctly points out, the internalized other reflects Seneca's general concern with the companions we select, and how we respond to the opinion of others. Cf. Long (1992:184) who describes Seneca and his fellow Roman Stoics "as providing instruction in how to look at oneself as a moral agent, how to review and adjudicate oneself, and how to test one's ethical consistency and integrity". As Habinek notes (1990:184) "it is worth noting how such technologies of the self develop largely within the context of friendships, whether real or imagined".

internalized observer of his actions, such as Epicurus, Cato or Laelius, in front of whom he would feel ashamed to sin.[115]

Seneca starts *Letter* 11 by discussing *verecundia* (often translated as 'sense of shame'), and the blushing that often accompanies it. *Verecundia*, he argues, is part of our human constitution and can neither be averted nor acquired. From a Stoic point of view, this statement is rather surprising, as it indicates that *verecundia* is not just an emotion triggered by assent to a particular proposition, but an inborn, hardwired reaction.[116] Though he calls it a fault (*vitium*, §6), the concluding part of the letter indicates that Seneca believes *verecundia* can be beneficial for a Stoic *proficiens* such as Lucilius. Toward the end of the letter, he cites the following recommendation, borrowed from Epicurus: "Cherish some man of high character, and keep him ever before your eyes, living as if he were watching you, and ordering all your actions as if he beheld them."[117]

Seneca describes this internalized viewer as a "guardian," "attendant," or "witness," and exhorts Lucilius to select either Cato or Laelius to fulfill this function—depending on whether each interlocutor would prefer a stricter or a gentler moral role model[118]. The closest he comes to actually defining the internalized viewer's function is his mention that this individual is meant to be a ruler (*regula*) by which we can straighten our moral character.[119]

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[115] On the concept of an internalized other and its philosophical implications, cf. Williams (1993, *passim*) and Bartsch (2006:191-208).

[116] In this, Seneca is joined by Epictetus, who similarly argues that the capacity to feel *aidôs* is not only an inborn feature of human nature, but a necessary prerequisite for moral progress. Cf. *supra,* pp. 67-69.

[117] *Ep.* 11.8: *Aliquis vir bonus nobis diligendus est ac semper ante oculos habendus, ut sic tamquam illo spectante vivamus et omnia tamquam illo vidente faciamus.*

[118] As Don Marietta (1970) has pointed out, the metaphors of witnessing and guarding are commonly used in Greek sources to refer to *syneidesis* (conscience). Seneca too uses the metaphors to refer to *conscientia* (*Ep.* 43.5; *Fragm.* 14 and 24 Haase = Lact. Div Inst 6.24.12-17), In Fragment 24 Haase Seneca calls this guardian 'God', a conception that refers to the Stoic notion that our *hegemonikon*, or rational self, is part and parcel of God. On Seneca's conception of *conscientia* and its relation with the inborn seeds of the virtues, cf. *supra*, pp. 83-87.

[119] *Ep.* 11.10: *ad quem mores nostri se ipsi exigent.* Cf. *De Otio* I.1 (*Quid quod secedere ad optimos viros et aliquod exemplum eligere ad quod vitam derigamus licet*?) and *Ep.* 95.39, in which Seneca writes that a man who has not yet internalized Stoic principles lacks a "rule by which he may regulate his acts, and which he may trust to tell him whether what he has done is right".

Seneca's emphasis on the need to select a role model Lucilius will fear and respect (*quem vereatur*) and follow in such a way that he will soon "be worthy of respect (*verendus*) himself" clearly builds on his discussion of the etymologically related *verecundia,* earlier in the letter.[120] Indeed, the suggestion that "most sins can be removed if a witness stands near to the ones about to sin" unmistakably refers to the restraining effect he ascribes to *verecundia* in the first half of the letter.[121] This clearly indicates that Seneca believes *verecundia* – which contains elements of shame, as well as fear and respect – is an important aspect of the *meditatio* of the internalized *exemplum,* exhorting Lucilius to carefully reflect on his actions and to turn his principles into actions[122].

Letter 25 repeats the recommendation to adopt an internalized observer of one's actions, but now does so in the context of a discussion of *pudor,* an emotion closely related to *verecundia*. As we saw earlier, this letter starts with a discussion of *pudor* and focuses on two mutual friends of Lucilius and Seneca, of which the first "still blushes at his sins," whereas the second person's faults needs to be "utterly crushed"[123]. After discussing the different therapeutic approaches he will employ in both cases, Seneca repeats Epicurus' recommendation to "do everything as if Epicurus were watching you." As in *Letter* 11, he uses the metaphors *custos* and *paedagogus* to refer to this internalized viewer. And again he tells Lucilius that the goal of this *meditatio* is to cultivate a feeling of respect for himself (*reverentia tui, tui dignatio*) and to turn *himself* "into the

[120] For the etymological relation, cf. OLD s.v. '*verecundus*', which notes that it is a compound of *vereor* and the suffix *-cundus*. Cf. Hachmann (1995:89) who argues that in this particular letter, *verecundia* clearly preserves the etymological link with *vereri*.

[121] *Ep.* 11.9: *magna pars peccatorum tollitur, si peccaturis testis adsistit*. Early on in the letter, Seneca reports a conversation he had with an unnamed friend of Lucilius, whom he praises for his good character. He argues that his blush when he was suddenly caught off-guard in their conversation reveals his *verecundia, is* a good sign in a young man (*bonum in adulescente signum*).

[122] On *verecundia*, cf. pp. 57-58.

[123] Cf. *supra*., p. 76.

kind of man in whose company [he] would not dare to sin."[124]

In both letters, Seneca does not directly explain what the internalized viewer is supposed to do, but describes its function by means of a set of metaphors borrowed from the domains of law and education (*custos, testis*), education (*paedagogus*), and architecture (*regula*). This conception of an exemplary individual as a moral standard is reminiscent of *Letter* 120, in which the idealized *persona* of a historical *exemplum* such as Socrates is presented as "a point of reference in assessing our experience of the ordinary world of defective agents."[125] An imagined Socrates, Cato, or Laelius will help Lucilius not only by inhibiting particular wrongful actions but also by helping him to obtain a better rational grasp of the moral truths *behind* the point of view of this *exemplum.*[126] Eventually, after many such encounters, Lucilius' understanding of moral goodness will be so refined, Seneca hopes, that he will be able to "dismiss his *paedagogus.*[127]

This attainment of moral autonomy completes the process of increasing self-judgment, whereby the judgment of one's social peers is first replaced by the judgment of an exemplary individual, who embodies Stoic values, and finally by one's own judgment, supported by a solid foundation of Stoic principles. The *meditatio* of the internalized viewer, then, is designed to lead the Stoic *proficiens* from other-judgment, in which he is guided by what an exemplary individual thinks, towards self-judgment, in which he has internalized the values that will allow him to correctly assess and correct his own behavior. At this point, the *proficiens* no longer needs to be

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[124] *Ep.* 25.6: *…dum te efficis eum cum quo peccare non audeas.* Seneca's description of the internalized viewer as leading to self-respect (*reverentia sui*) recalls his argument in *Ben.* VII.1.7 that greatness of soul is reflected in the ability to open one's *conscienta* to the gods and to be self-respecting (*se veritus*).

[125] Inwood (2005:294).

[126] As Brinton argues (1986:255) each engagement with the internalized other entails two distinct questions: "1) Would a Socrates do X in these circumstances and 2) Would I do X if Socrates were watching?" Brinton argues that the answer to both "are meant to influence our behavior as rational agents", i.e. to "provide reasons". This, however, is only part of the equation. Whereas the first question is limited to a specific moral question at hand, the second question clearly involves a reflection upon our moral character. By asking "would I do X if Socrates were watching?", we are in effect asking "would I be ashamed, or proud, to do X, if Socrates were watching".

[127] *Ep.* 25.6: *Cum iam profeceris tantum ut sit tibi etiam tui reverentia, licebit dimittas paedagogum.*

ashamed, but can rely on his self-respect (*reverentia sui*) to direct his behavior. In Bernard Williams' terminology, we can speak of a process of bootstrapping, by which originally primitive emotional reactions "are progressively more structured by social, ethical or moral notions."[128] Seneca's recommendation of this approach, which starts by imagining the presence an exemplary observer, and culminates in moral autonomy, shows that, on his view, emotions such as *verecundia* and *pudor* should not be eradicated but used as a tool to attain moral progress.

9. Conclusion

In this chapter Seneca's, we have examined various ways in which Seneca refashions traditional aristocratic role models and turns them into dynamic tools for moral progress. He does so by describing exemplary actions in vivid detail, by drawing a sharp contrast between virtuous and vicious conduct, and by putting words in the mouth of exemplary characters and encouraging his readers to internalize carefully selected *exempla* and employing them as moral guides and critics.

In doing so, Seneca makes it easier for his addressees to enter into the exemplary person's mindset and to discover the moral reasoning behind their actions. This ongoing engagement with, and analysis of, the deeds of exemplary figures functions as a tool to support reasoning "by analogy" – as he puts it in *Letter* 120 – and the gradual formation of a concept of the good that is anchored in the *proficiens*' own experiences, rather than merely accepted as a dogmatic given.

As we have seen, Seneca's invocation of *exempla* often starts with an emotional appeal, rousing his readers to admire their exemplary conduct, feel ashamed of making moral mistakes in front of them, or feel disgust when confront with negative *exempla*. At first sight, this approach

[128] Williams (1993:218).

may seem to be a merely pragmatic opening gambit, appealing to unreflective cultural norms in order to get his readers hooked and make them stay for the moral message. As Seneca makes clear in *Letter* 120, however, the unreflective feelings people have when contemplating *exempla* are actually based on inborn seeds of the virtues within them, and represent the beginnings of moral progress. As such, the admiration, shame, or disgust we feel when confronted with vivid representations of virtuous or vicious conduct are not just irrational reactions that need to be transcended, but ingrained moral intuitions that need to be developed through reflection, practice, and meditation.

Conclusion

The Stoics, textbook introductions tell us, were moral intellectualists, and their solution to the emotional excess and misguided values of humanity was to expose the irrationality of our everyday beliefs, and to teach us hat there is a natural, rational order to which we ought to conform. The bright light of reason, on this view, would gradually dispel the cloud of emotion and error. But as Seneca, and Chrysippus before him, realized, the people who need this Stoic advice the most tend to be the most unlikely to be receptive to it. This problem was already familiar to Socrates, who often faced resistance to his probing *elenchus* and made powerful enemies in the process, leading to his conviction and untimely death. How could a philosopher convince his interlocutors that they were in a bad state, and that the drastic solutions the philosopher offered were going to help them, without incurring either fervent resistance or complete indifference?

Seneca's solution to this problem, I argued in this dissertation, was to start from his addressees' current beliefs and values and show both how they fell short of who they claimed to be, and that there was a moral ideal of courage, honesty and kindness that was worth aspiring to. In doing so, he often appeals to his addressees' emotions, making them feel shame or regret at their missteps, and admiration and enthusiasm for the moral good or for exemplary men and women who embodied it. This approach, however, seemed to conflict with the intellectualism, and rejection of the emotions that was the hallmark of Stoicism[1].

Was Seneca, who often insisted on his philosophical independence, simply sidestepping the intellectualist tendencies of the Stoic school for pragmatic reasons or aligning himself with a

[1] On the Stoic rejection of all emotions, even for instrumental reasons, cf. *supra,* pp. 26-27.

dualistic strand in Stoicism represented by Panaetius and Posidonius? Most of the existing scholarship on Senecan admonition points in this direction. This approach offers an easy way out of the *aporia* and helpfully explains away apparent inconsistencies and contradictions in Seneca's accounts.

But why, I asked, would Seneca be content to let such glaring theoretical gaps or contradictions be on display in his works, especially in some of his most theoretically sophisticated works, such as *Letter* 94? When I started putting the pieces of the puzzle together and examined the scattered evidence on admonition in Seneca's works in greater detail, a pattern began to emerge. Several key passages in which Seneca recommended apparently "unorthodox" forms of admonition, such as shaming his interlocutors, or confronting them with dazzling exempla or inspiring *sententiae* referred to what he called "seeds of the virtues" that are inborn and represent our potential for moral development.

These "seeds of the virtues" refer to the *aphormai*, literally starting-points, which are implanted in us by Nature to allow us to discern – and aspire to – the moral good, and to recognize evil before it is too late to turn away from it. When Seneca employs forms of admonition that elicit moral emotions such as shame, regret, enthusiasm or admiration, in other words, he is not instilling misguided beliefs in his audiences, but activating their inborn inclination towards the moral good. This inclination, Seneca writes, may be temporarily subdued by ignorance, but in all but the most corrupted people, targeted admonition can succeed in awakening them.

By recognizing a category of moral emotions based on the Stoic concept of inborn "seeds of the virtues", Seneca answers both ancient and modern critics who claim that his admonitory techniques are inconsistent with Stoic theory. In addition, his conception of the moral emotions and their role in admonition vitiates the claim that the Stoics failed to address the problem of the

moral emotions – as Cooper, Brennan, and Graver suggest – or that this problem was first addressed by Epictetus or Augustine – as respectively Kamtekar and Byers claim[2].

In addition, my account of Seneca's conception of moral admonition offers new support for the ongoing revaluation of Seneca as *both* a committed Stoic and a pragmatic philosophical adviser[3]. On my view, Seneca's practical emphasis on finding therapeutic strategies that worked in practice encouraged him to find theoretical explanations for *why* they worked within the framework of Stoic moral psychology. Seneca's practical explorations and theoretical reflections, in other words, mutually supported each other and encouraged him to develop a therapeutic approach that is meets his addressees on their own ground, while being firmly grounded in the Stoic belief that all humans naturally desire the good.

[2] For a discussion of this scholarship, cf. *supra,* pp. 12-14.

[3] For the different emphasis on Seneca as a pragmatist and as a philosopher, cf. Roller (2001:80 n.27) who describes him as "a Roman aristocrat in the first instance, who presents Stoic ethics to his social peers [...] as a way out of certain contemporary ethical binds", vs. Inwood (2001:80 n.27), who sees Seneca as "first and foremost a Stoic philosopher", working to "push back new frontiers within Stoic philosophy", as Inwood (2005:305). Both Inwood (2005) and Sorabji (2001) affirm Seneca's alignment with mainstream Stoic principles as well as his philosophical sophistication and originality.

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