

## THE EPISTLES OF SENECA

meliarum, ut intres, plus, cum intraveris. Praeteri istos gradus divitum et magno adgestu suspensa vestibula; non in praerupto tantum istic stabis, sed in lubrico. Huc potius te ad sapientiam derige tranquillissimasque res eius et simul amplissimas pete.

- 13 Quaecumque videntur eminere in rebus humanis, quamvis pusilla sint et comparatione humillimorum extent, per difficiles tamen et arduos tramites adeuntur. Confragosa in fastigium dignitatis via est; at si conscendere hunc verticem libet, cui se fortuna summisit, omnia quidem sub te, quae pro excelsissimis habentur, aspicias, sed tamen venies ad summa per planum. VALE.

### LXXXV.

#### SENECA LVCILIO SVO SALVTEM

- 1 Peperceram tibi et quicquid nodosi adhuc supererat, praeterieram, contentus quasi gustum tibi dare eorum, quae a nostris dicuntur, ut probetur virtus ad explendam beatam vitam sola satis efficax. Iubes me quicquid est interrogationum aut nostrarum aut ad traductionem nostram excogitatarum comprehendere. Quod si facere voluero, non erit epistula, sed liber. Illud totiens testor, hoc me argumentorum genere

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\* For such treatment cf. Juvenal iii. 152 f.—

Nil habet infelix paupertas durius in se  
Quam quod ridiculos homines facit, etc.

<sup>b</sup> Such as that in *Ep.* lxxxiii. 9 (constructed, however, by Seneca himself) *dormienti nemo secretum sermonem committit*, etc. See *ad loc.* and *n.*

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an insult<sup>a</sup> for you as you enter the door, and still more after you have entered. Pass by the steps that mount to rich men's houses, and the porches rendered hazardous by the huge throng; for there you will be standing, not merely on the edge of a precipice but also on slippery ground. Instead of this, direct your course hither to wisdom, and seek her ways, which are ways of surpassing peace and plenty. Whatever seems conspicuous in the affairs of men—however petty it may really be and prominent only by contrast with the lowest objects—is nevertheless approached by a difficult and toilsome pathway. It is a rough road that leads to the heights of greatness; but if you desire to scale this peak, which lies far above the range of Fortune, you will indeed look down from above upon all that men regard as most lofty, but none the less you can proceed to the top over level ground. Farewell.

### LXXXV. ON SOME VAIN SYLLOGISMS

I had been inclined to spare you, and had omitted any knotty problems that still remained undiscussed; I was satisfied to give you a sort of taste of the views held by the men of our school, who desire to prove that virtue is of itself sufficiently capable of rounding out the happy life. But now you bid me include the entire bulk either of our own syllogisms or of those which have been devised<sup>b</sup> by other schools for the purpose of belittling us. If I shall be willing to do this, the result will be a book, instead of a letter. And I declare again and again that I take no pleasure in such proofs. I am ashamed to

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non delectari. Pudet in aciem descendere pro dis hominibusque susceptam subula armatum.

2 "Qui prudens est, et temperans est. Qui temperans est, et constans. Qui constans est, inperturbatus est. Qui inperturbatus est, sine tristitia est. Qui sine tristitia est, beatus est; ergo prudens beatus est et prudentia ad beatam vitam satis est."

3 Huic collectioni hoc modo Peripatetici quidam respondent, ut inperturbatum et constantem et sine tristitia sic interpretentur, tanquam inperturbatus dicatur, qui raro perturbatur et modice, non qui numquam. Item sine tristitia eum dici aiunt, qui non est obnoxius tristitiae nec frequens nimiusve in hoc vitio. Illud enim humanam naturam negare, alicuius animum immunem esse tristitia. Sapientem non vinci maerore, ceterum tangi. Et cetera in hunc modum  
4 sectae suae respondentia. Non his tollunt adfectus, sed temperant. Quantulum autem sapienti damus, si inbecillissimis fortior est et maestissimis laetior et effrenatissimis moderatior et humillimis maior? Quid, si miretur velocitatem suam Ladas<sup>1</sup> ad claudos debilesque respiciens?

Illa vel intactae segetis per summa volaret  
Gramina nec cursu teneras laesisset aristas,  
Vel mare per medium fluctu suspensa tumentis  
Ferret iter celeres nec tingeret aequore plantas.

<sup>1</sup> *Ladas* Lipsius; *laudans* VPb.

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<sup>a</sup> Cf. *Ep.* lxxxii. 24 *subula leonem excipis?*

<sup>b</sup> E. V. Arnold (*Roman Stoicism*, p. 333) calls attention to the passion of anger, for example, which the Peripatetics believed should be kept under control, but not stamped out.

<sup>c</sup> Vergil, *Aeneid*, vii. 808 ff. The lines describe Camilla, the Volscian warrior-huntress.

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enter the arena and undertake battle on behalf of gods and men armed only with an awl.<sup>a</sup>

“He that possesses prudence is also self-restrained; he that possesses self-restraint is also unwavering; he that is unwavering is unperturbed; he that is unperturbed is free from sadness; he that is free from sadness is happy. Therefore, the prudent man is happy, and prudence is sufficient to constitute the happy life.”

Certain of the Peripatetics <sup>b</sup> reply to this syllogism by interpreting “unperturbed,” “unwavering,” and “free from sadness” in such a way as to make “unperturbed” mean one who is rarely perturbed and only to a moderate degree, and not one who is never perturbed. Likewise, they say that a person is called “free from sadness” who is not subject to sadness, one who falls into this objectionable state not often nor in too great a degree. It is not, they say, the way of human nature that a man’s spirit should be exempt from sadness, or that the wise man is not overcome by grief but is merely touched by it, and other arguments of this sort, all in accordance with the teachings of their school. They do not abolish the passions in this way; they only moderate them. But how petty is the superiority which we attribute to the wise man, if he is merely braver than the most craven, happier than the most dejected, more self-controlled than the most unbridled, and greater than the lowliest! Would Ladas boast his swiftness in running by comparing himself with the halt and the weak?

For she could skim the topmost blades of corn  
And touch them not, nor bruise the tender ears;  
Or travel over seas, well-poised above  
The swollen floods, nor dip her flying feet  
In ocean’s waters.<sup>c</sup>

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Haec est pernecitas per se aestimata, non quae tardissimorum conlatione laudatur. Quid, si sanum voces leviter febricitantem? Non est bona valitudo mediocritas morbi. "Sic," inquit, "sapiens inperturbatus dicitur, quomodo apyrina dicuntur, non quibus nulla inest duritia granorum, sed quibus minor." Falsum est. Non enim deminutionem malorum in bono viro intellego, sed vacationem; nulla debent esse, non parva. Nam si ulla sunt, crescent et interim impediunt. Quomodo oculos maior et perfecta suffusio excaecat, sic modica turbat.

6 Si das aliquos adfectus sapienti, impar illis erit ratio et velut torrente quodam auferetur, praesertim cum illi non unum adfectum des,<sup>1</sup> cum quo conluctetur, sed omnis. Plus potest quamvis mediocrium turba quam posset unius magni violentia. Habet pecuniae cupiditatem, sed modicam. Habet ambitionem, sed non concitatam. Habet iracundiam, sed placabilem. Habet inconstantiam, sed minus vagam ac mobilem. Habet libidinem non insanam. Melius cum illo ageretur, qui unum vitium integrum haberet, quam cum eo, qui leviora quidem, sed omnia.

8 Deinde nihil interest, quam magnus sit adfectus;

<sup>1</sup> *des* later MSS. ; *sed* Pb ; *sit* corr. from *sed* V.

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<sup>a</sup> Seneca uses *suffusio* of jaundice in *Ep.* xcvi. 16. Celsus, vii. 7. 14, explains the cause of cataracts, *vel ex morbo vel ex ictu concrevit humor*, and outlines the treatment.

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This is speed estimated by its own standard, not the kind which wins praise by comparison with that which is slowest. Would you call a man well who has a light case of fever? No, for good health does not mean moderate illness. They say, "The wise man is called unperturbed in the sense in which pomegranates are called mellow—not that there is no hardness at all in their seeds, but that the hardness is less than it was before." That view is wrong; for I am not referring to the gradual weeding out of evils in a good man, but to the complete absence of evils; there should be in him no evils at all, not even any small ones. For if there are any, they will grow, and as they grow will hamper him. Just as a large and complete cataract <sup>a</sup> wholly blinds the eyes, so a medium-sized cataract dulls their vision.

If by your definition the wise man has any passions whatever, his reason will be no match for them and will be carried swiftly along, as it were, on a rushing stream,—particularly if you assign to him, not one passion with which he must wrestle, but all the passions. And a throng of such, even though they be moderate, can affect him more than the violence of one powerful passion. He has a craving for money, although in a moderate degree. He has ambition, but it is not yet fully aroused. He has a hot temper, but it can be appeased. He has inconstancy, but not the kind that is very capricious or easily set in motion. He has lust, but not the violent kind. We could deal better with a person who possessed one full-fledged vice, than with one who possessed all the vices, but none of them in extreme form. Again, it makes no difference how great the passion is; no matter what its size may

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quantuscumque est, parere nescit, consilium non accipit. Quemadmodum rationi nullum animal optemperat, non ferum, non domesticum et mite, natura enim illorum est surda suadenti; sic non secuntur, non audiunt adfectus, quantulicumque sunt. Tigres leonesque numquam feritatem exuunt, aliquando summittunt, et cum minime expectaveris, exasperatur torvitas mitigata. Numquam bona fide  
 9 vitia mansuescunt. Deinde, si ratio proficit, ne incipient quidem adfectus; si invita ratione coeperint, invita perseverabunt. Facilius est enim initia illorum prohibere quam impetum regere. Falsa est itaque ista mediocritas et inutilis, eodem loco habenda, quo si quis diceret modice insaniendum, modice  
 10 aegrotandum. Sola virtus habet, non recipiunt animi mala temperamentum. Facilius sustuleris illa quam rexeris. Numquid dubium est, quin vitia mentis humanae inveterata et dura, quae morbos vocamus, immoderata sint, ut avaritia, ut crudelitas, ut inpotentia<sup>1</sup>? Ergo immoderati sunt et adfectus.  
 11 Ab his enim ad illa transitur. Deinde si das aliquid iuris tristitiae, timori, cupiditati, ceteris motibus<sup>2</sup> pravis, non erunt in nostra potestate. Quare? Quia extra nos sunt, quibus iritantur. Itaque crescent, prout magnas habuerint<sup>3</sup> minoresve causas, quibus concitentur. Maior erit timor, si plus, quo exterreatur, aut propius aspexerit, acrior cupiditas, quo

<sup>1</sup> *impietas*, after *inpotentia*, removed by Madvig as a gloss; *inpotentia* later MSS.; *innocentia* VPb; *inimicitia* V<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> *motibus* later MSS.; *moribus* VPb.

<sup>3</sup> *habuerint* later MSS.; *habuerunt* VPb.

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<sup>4</sup> Another reply to the Peripatetic claim of § 3.

# END OF SAMPLE TEXT



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