

## SENECA'S LANGUAGE AND STYLE. II

### Linguistic differences and connections between Seneca's philosophical works and his tragedies\*

We have verse as well as prose from Cicero, Columella, Petronius (and from many Christian authors), but the corpus of Seneca's tragedies is especially extensive (the *Octavia* and the disputed *Hercules Oetaeus* are not considered here).<sup>1</sup>

Although some features in Seneca's style may be called 'baroque' (e. g. 'abundant' expression), this aspect should not be overemphasized. Actually, even in his tragedies, 'classicizing' features can be detected. As had done Varius and Ovid, Seneca as a playwright prefers classical models viewed through the prism of the normative poetics of the Alexandrian age. Artistic οἰκονομία is a governing principle.<sup>2</sup> This is an important general background even to Seneca's use of language. Seneca's deliberate use of poetic vocabulary has been discussed in the first part of the article.

Between Seneca's philosophical works and his tragedies there are differences of approach to language and style. Whereas the epistles are supposed to be rather 'useful' than 'delightful' ("Our words should aim not to please, but to help": *Epist.* 75. 5), in the tragedies there is no such theoretical restriction. But even in the *Epistles* Seneca makes concessions to rhetoric (*ibid.*; see part I of this article, p. 81–82; 88–89). As will be shown, rhetoric is not an otiose adornment, but conditions the structure of the texts and the methods of meditation.

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\* Loeb translations were gratefully used here, but not always followed literally: *Ad Lucilium epistulae morales*. Transl. by R. M. Gummere (London – Cambridge, Mass. 1917–1925); *Moral Essays*. Transl. by J. W. Basore (London – Cambridge, Mass. 1928–1935); *Naturales quaestiones*. Transl. by T. H. Corcoran (London – Cambridge, Mass. 1971–1972); *Tragedies*. Transl. by J. G. Fitch (London – Cambridge, Mass. 2002); Transl. by F. J. Miller (London – Cambridge, Mass. 1917).

<sup>1</sup> On the language and style of these works: M. Billerbeck, *Senecas Tragödien. Sprachliche und stilistische Untersuchungen* (Leiden 1988) 145–173; 174–181.

<sup>2</sup> Thus he observes the division of plays into five acts, the use of three actors, and the unity of the place of action. He even eliminates "superfluous" persons found in his models, such as Aegeus in the *Medea*. Moreover, he reduces the musical solo scenes (monodies) cherished by early Latin dramatists (while choruses are found in all plays, *cantica* sung by soloists are absent from *Phoenissae*, *Oedipus Rex*, and *Hercules furens*). See part I of this article, pp. 89–90.

Nor is poetry excluded from the *Epistles*: actually, the philosophical works are interspersed with poetic quotations (which, of course, serve a didactic purpose, as explained by Seneca in *Epist.* 108. 8–12).<sup>3</sup> In *Epist.* 108. 6 the difference between a philosopher's lessons and the theatre is stressed.<sup>4</sup> In *Epist.* 80. 7 Seneca compares human life to a theatrical play: *vitae humanae mimus* (*Epist.* 80. 7). He quotes lines from tragedies and measures what they say against the performer's real life: He who is acting a king's role is actually a poor slave. The same applies to our lives (*Epist.* 80. 10): Theatrical plays, therefore, can serve as a mirror helping us to analyze our own situation. This does not mean, however, that the plays pursue a didactic purpose. Although the degree to which Seneca shared a Platonic view of poetry as ἐνθουσιασμός is a matter of dispute,<sup>5</sup> Seneca the philosopher warns his readers against the power of poetry to raise emotions (*Epist.* 115. 12 *adfectibus nostris facem subdant*), for instance, by praising bad or irrelevant things. He reports that when the onlookers of a Euripidean drama protested vehemently against a passage commending wealth and greed, the poet asked them to suspend their judgement until the end of the play. Seneca, therefore, perfectly knew that readers of dramas should take into account the context. This explains the – otherwise surprising – fact that Seneca himself in a tragedy (*Thyestes* 207 f.) paraphrased a line which he repeatedly condemned in his philosophical writings: the famous words from Accius' *Atreus*: *oderint dum metuant* "Let them hate, if only they fear".<sup>6</sup> In such cases Seneca subscribes to a standard objection of philosophers to poets:<sup>7</sup> Poetry fosters and nurtures emotions, which philosophy

<sup>3</sup> See M. v. Albrecht, *Wort und Wandlung. Senecas Lebenskunst* (Leiden 2004) 85; G. Mazzoli, *Seneca e la poesia* (Milano 1970) 108.

<sup>4</sup> "Certain of them come to hear and not to learn, just as we are attracted to the theatre to satisfy the pleasures of the ear, whether by a speech, or by a song, or by a play".

<sup>5</sup> Affirmative: Mazzoli (n. 3) and J. Dingel, *Seneca und die Dichtung* (Heidelberg 1974); see, however, A. Setaioli, "Seneca e lo stile", *ANRW* II. 32. 2 (1985) 857, 801–811. "For whether we believe with the Greek poet that 'sometimes it is a pleasure also to rave' (Menander, *fr.* 421 Kock; cf. Hor. *Carm.* 4. 12. 28) or with Plato (*Phdr.* 245 a) that 'the sane mind knocks in vain at the door of poetry' or with Aristotle (*Probl.* 30. 1) that 'no great genius has ever existed without some touch of madness' – be that as it may, the lofty utterance that rises above the attempts of others is impossible unless the mind is excited" (*Dial.* 9 = *Tranq.* 17. 10 f.)

<sup>6</sup> Seneca calls these words *magnas, sed detestabiles* (*Clem.* 2. 2. 2), *dira et abominanda* (*Dial.* 3 [= *De ira* 1] 20. 4), *exsecrabilis* (*Clem.* 1. 12. 4). In the same spirit, Maecenas is criticized, not for the style, but for the content of one of his poems (*Epist.* 101. 10 f.), and a line from Virgil is used as a 'remedy' (*Epist.* 101. 13).

<sup>7</sup> Cf. *Dial.* 10 (= *Brev. vit.*) 16. 5 *Inde etiam poetarum furor, fabulis humanos errores alentium ... quid aliud est vitia nostra incendere, quam auctores illis inscribere*

tries to dominate or even eradicate. So it does not come as a surprise that emotions are even developed deliberately by several figures in Senecan drama (see below, p. 137–142). Seneca is fully aware of the difference between poetry and philosophy. Allegorical interpretation of poetry in a philosophical key is explicitly rejected in a passage criticizing philosophers of widely divergent schools all referring to Homer as a precedent (*Epist.* 88. 4 f.): “No one of these doctrines is to be fathered upon Homer, just because they are all there; for they are irreconcilable with one another”. Instead, “we should learn what made him wise”.<sup>8</sup> In this sense, moral interpretation of poetry is often found in Seneca (e. g., *Dial.* 12 [= *Polyb.*] 11. 5). Whether such a philosophical reading should be called ‘allegorical’ or not may be left open.<sup>9</sup> However, recourse to allegorical interpretation is evident, when Seneca uses Virgil’s description of a male colt to characterize a “great man” (*magno viro*). Here even Seneca’s terminology (*Epist.* 95. 67 *ex alio in se transferre* and 69 *dum aliud agit*) alludes to the standard definition of allegory (Quintilian, *Inst.* 9. 2. 92, tr. Butler): *aliud dicere, aliud intellegi velle* “saying one thing, while intending something else to be understood”.<sup>10</sup> However, in the Senecan passage allegory is not attributed to the poet’s intention, but is limited to the critic’s mind (cf. *ego certe*). In other cases, too, Seneca uses quotations from Virgil quite independently of their literal sense.<sup>11</sup> Therefore, in Seneca’s view, a moralizing reading of a poetic text must be methodically separated from the assumption of a moralizing intent of the author, and we are not compelled to read Seneca’s tragedies in a didactic vein.

On the other hand, the tragedies show the influence of rhetorical invention and disposition, see, for instance, the *controversia* between the nurse and the queen in the first act of *Phaedra*. Later in the drama, the nurse directs a *suasoria* to Hippolytus. The connections between the philosophical works and the tragedies were felt by Seneca’s contemporaries and even in later times: just think of Lucan, Silius Italicus, Prudentius. Christian martyrs and their deaths would be shaped into the image of Stoic martyrs, and the passion of St. Hippolytus into the image of his Senecan namesake

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*deos*. Xenophanes B 11 f. Diels–Kranz; Euripides, *Bellerophon* fr. 292. 7; Plato banished Homer from his Republic (*Rep.* 3. 398 a; cf. *Cic. Rep.* 4. 5. 5).

<sup>8</sup> On *sapere* as the basis of good writing, see below, note 75.

<sup>9</sup> Allegorical interpretation is not found here by Dingel (n. 5) 43 and Setaioli (n. 5) 857; indirectly affirmed by Mazzoli (n. 3) 113 f. and, more confidently, 223: “per la prima volta nell’antichità, se non erriamo, il criterio allegorico, tradizionale nell’esegesi di Omero, viene esplicitamente esteso alla poesia virgiliana”.

<sup>10</sup> Mazzoli (n. 3) 224 f.

<sup>11</sup> Mazzoli (n. 3) 226 f.; *Aen.* 2. 726–729; *Epist.* 56. 12–14; whereas *Benef.* 3. 37. 1 shows full awareness of the literal sense of the same passage.

(Prudentius, *Perist.* 11; Seneca, *Phaedra* 1000–1114); however, for Seneca's play there is no need to assume a didactic purpose.<sup>12</sup>

*Sententiae.* In both groups of works Seneca shows a preference for condensing his thoughts into brief and pointed statements. Seneca's striving for *brevitas* shows, for instance, from the fact that (while Greek tragic poets do not go further than giving half a line to a single speaker) our author breaks up his trimeters into even smaller units (quarters of lines). Furthermore, both his philosophical works and his dramas abound in *sententiae*. In Seneca's tragedies, *sententiae* are even more frequent than in his Greek models. While in the philosophical writings the educative purpose is paramount, in the tragedies *sententiae* frequently serve a dialectic aim in the immediate context of a discussion;<sup>13</sup> so they appear even more impressive against the background of a rich variety of themes and ideas, all the more as in this genre the author is not constrained to keep himself within the limits of 'positive thinking'.<sup>14</sup> The massive presence of *sententiae*, therefore, does not prove a didactic purpose of Seneca in his tragedies.

*Asyndeton.* In Greek tragedies (on heroes such as Oedipus, Thyestes, Alcmeon, Telephus, Peleus) the stress is laid on the passage from happiness to unhappiness. Roman dramatists from the outset stress the *pathos* of this situation by building asyndetic series of epithets, often alliterated (Accius, *Medea* 415 Ribbeck<sup>2</sup>): "An exile among enemies, hopeless, destitute, abandoned, wandering".<sup>15</sup> Seneca follows this pattern in *Medea*'s malediction to Jason (*Medea* 20 f.) "May he live. May he wander through unknown cities in want, in exile, in fear, hated and homeless" (tr. Fitch) *Vivat*;<sup>16</sup> *per*

<sup>12</sup> According to M. Fuhrmann ("Die Funktion grausiger und ekelhafter Motive in der lateinischen Dichtung", in: H. R. Jauss [ed.], *Die nicht mehr schönen Künste* [München 1968] 45–50), Seneca insists on the contrast between Hippolytus' 'Stoic' attitude and the panic of the others; in my view Fuhrmann stresses too much the exclusively didactic aim of this passage, whereas Seneca tries to raise the listeners' admiration for Hippolytus as a character.

<sup>13</sup> B. Seidensticker (*Die Gesprächsverdichtung in den Tragödien Senecas* [Heidelberg 1969] 85–199) studies, among other aspects of *sententia*: condensation, ambivalence, allusion, transition from mimesis to interpretation.

<sup>14</sup> M. Armisen-Marchetti, *Sapientiae facies. Etude sur les images de Sénèque* (Paris 1989) 349 f.

<sup>15</sup> *Exul inter hostis, expes, expers desertus vagus*; cf. also Accius, *Eurysaces* 333 f. *Nunc per terras vagus, extorris, / regno exturbatus* ("Now wandering over the earth, an exile, driven from my kingdom"; paratragic, cf. Lucilius 82 f. Marx: *Non dico: vincat licet, et vagus exulet, erret, / exlex*).

<sup>16</sup> Life appears sometimes as a punishment more cruel than death: cf. also Seneca, *Herc. f.*; this view is in accord with contemporary life experience: Suetonius, *Tiberius* 61. *15 morivolentibus vis adhibita vivendi*.

*urbes erret ignotas egens / exul pavens invisus incerti laris.* Dido's curse against Aeneas was certainly known to Seneca (Verg. *Aen.* 4. 615–620: “May he be harried in war by adventurous tribes, and exiled from his own land; may Ascanius be torn from his arms...” [tr. C. Day Lewis]).<sup>17</sup> Interestingly, Virgil is not satisfied with a mere series of epithets (*vexatus... extorris... avolsus*), but fills each of them with detailed information and builds a rounded-off sentence, perhaps in order to avoid mere repetition of a worn-out pattern). In the case of this type of asyndeton, Seneca is much closer to Accius than to Virgil (therefore, one should not exclude too apodictically the influence of old Latin on Seneca).<sup>18</sup>

The “unfolding” of an idea by way of subdivision into its partial aspects (μερισμός) is a rhetorical procedure known to us from the philosophical writings. It is found in the tragedies as well. Antithesis, “polarity” of expression, catalogue, asyndeton, aprosdoketon have been described by Billerbeck (n. 1). The same is true for gradation (in monologues), rhetorical questions, *correctio* with verbal *polyptoton*, and comparatives (omitting the second member of the comparison). Whereas antithesis, gradation and abundance (from verbal variation to explicit elaboration, especially in passages competing with epic style)<sup>19</sup> determine the structure of paragraphs, there is a pronounced striving for brevity within the single sentence: at the end of sentences or after a significant word, an appended participle can appear (“While I plant my last kisses on my children as their mother – perhaps a dying mother” [tr. Fitch] *dum extrema natis mater infigo oscula, fortasse moriens* [*Med.* 290]; “His face is that of Jove, – but when hurling thunder” [tr. Fitch] *Vultus est illi Iovis, / sed fulminantis* [*Herc. f.* 724 f.]), a name (“There is an even greater threat than these: – Medea” [tr. Fitch] *est et his maior metus: / Medea* [*Med.* 516 f.]), an infinitive (“The only safety for Oedipus is not to be saved” [tr. Fitch] *Unica Oedipodae est salus / non esse salvum* [*Phoen.* 89 f.]) or brief exclamation may serve as a conclusive comment: “O impious crime, grim and horrid sight” (tr. Miller) *scelus nefandum, triste et aspectu horridum!* (*Herc. f.* 1004).

Philosophical influence in Seneca's dramas is by no means limited to *sententiae*, even in the field of style.<sup>20</sup> There are entire developments com-

<sup>17</sup> The same is true for passages from the *Aeneid* which dwell on sufferings on land and sea (*Phoen.* 504 f. [Iocasta:] *Te maria tot diversa, tot casus vagum / egere*), cf. Verg. *Aen.* 1. 3; 6. 83 f.

<sup>18</sup> For a different view, Billerbeck (n. 1) 141 (“sozusagen nichts”).

<sup>19</sup> “Abundant, superfluous” elements, therefore, should not be banished from the text: Billerbeck (n. 1) 140.

<sup>20</sup> Billerbeck (n. 1) 141 underrates the stylistic parallels between Seneca's tragedies and his philosophical prose.

parable to philosophical protreptics or constructed as negative companion pieces to the latter ones (see below).

As for metre,<sup>21</sup> Seneca does not use the senarius, but the iambic trimeter and handles the latter according to strict rules. In his choruses anapaests prevail, but there are other metres as well. Seneca shows a marked preference for shortening final *-o*: in this regard he is “omnium poetarum negligentissimus”<sup>22</sup> – this is a “modernist” feature. (For more details, see part I, pp. 89–90.) Some stylistic differences have metrical reasons: *Magis ac magis* is used by Seneca only in his prose works – its last three syllables can be considered a cretic – , whereas *magis magisque* is iambic and therefore appears both in drama (*Thy.* 992) and prose (*Nat.* 3. 27. 7). If Seneca in messengers' reports shows a preference for the use of nouns,<sup>23</sup> whereas Euripides prefers verbs, this might be owing to his striving for a ‘monumental’ style.<sup>24</sup> On philosophical terms, see part I, pp. 75–76.

Second - person prohibitions are frequent in Seneca's prose and verse. In prose Seneca uses the standard constructions (*noli/te* with the infinitive and *ne* with perfect subjunctive, but *non est, quod* with subjunctive is much more common).<sup>25</sup> The first two are absent from Seneca's tragedies, the third is found at *Thyest.* 414–416, where “any prosaic tone is not inappropriate”.<sup>26</sup> In the tragedies the common form of prohibition is *ne* with imperative (originally it is “inhibitive”: “stop doing this”); where it appears in prose, it might retain this old meaning (e. g. *ne timete; ne metue*). In Seneca's prose it is attested only once (*Dial.* 2 [= *Const. sap.*] 19. 4): *Ne repugnat vestro bono et hanc spem... alite, ... meliora*

<sup>21</sup> W. Marx, *Funktion und Form der Chorlieder in den Seneca-Tragödien*, Diss. Heidelberg (Köln 1932); R. Giomini, *De canticis polymetricis in Agamemnone et Oedipode Annaeanis* (Roma 1959); J. D. Bishop, “The Meaning of the Choral Meters in Senecan Tragedy”, *RhM* 111 (1968) 197–219; N. Catone, “Metro e lingua nella *Phaedra* di Seneca”, *Atene e Roma* n. s. 16 (1971) 19–29; J. G. Fitch, *Seneca's Anapaests. Metre, Colometry, Text and Artistry in the Anapaests of Seneca's Tragedies* (Atlanta 1987).

<sup>22</sup> R. Hartenberger, *De o finali apud poetas latinos ab Ennio usque ad Iuvenalem*. Diss. (Bonn 1911) 65.

<sup>23</sup> W.-L. Liebermann, *Studien zu Senecas Tragödien* (Meisenheim 1974) 27.

<sup>24</sup> O. Hiltbrunner, “Seneca als Tragödiendichter in der Forschung von 1965 bis 1975”, *ANRW* II. 32. 2 (1985) 999.

<sup>25</sup> R. Kühner, C. Stegmann, *Ausführliche Grammatik der lateinischen Sprache. Satzlehre*. Bearb. von A. Thierfelder. II (Hannover 31955) 278 f.; O. Rauschnig, *De Latinitate L. Annaei Senecae philosophi*. Diss. (Jena–Königsberg 1876) 9 f.

<sup>26</sup> H. M. Hine, “Poetic Influence on Prose: The Case of the Younger Seneca”, in: T. Reinhardt et al. (eds.), *Aspects of the Language of Latin Prose* (Oxford 2005) 225, who, however, shows that *non est, quod* is largely attested also in poetry.

*excipite... ac iuvate*. Here the use of the elevated form is justified by concinnity (cf. the following imperatives), but also by rhetoric: final paragraphs favour an impassioned appeal to the reader and the use of elevated language. In addition, the inhibitive meaning is quite appropriate here: “stop resisting...”.

#### Points of contact between Seneca’s prose and poetry<sup>27</sup>

Re - defining “exile”. Influence of philosophical prose and of Stoic and Epicurean philosophy is felt in Seneca’s tragedies, when we find a positive assessment of exile (as an occasion for a contemplative life): in the *Thyestes*<sup>28</sup> (cf. 533 f. “Let it be mine to hide amidst the throng” [tr. Miller] *Liceat in media mihi / latere turba*) and also in the *Oedipus*. Seneca gives the theme of exile a new, Stoic turn, especially in his *Thyestes* and in his *Oedipus*. Whereas the Euripidean Polynices (*Phoen.* 391) considered the loss of the freedom of speech the greatest evil of exile, in our Roman tragedian *regnum* is the supreme evil. In a chorus, the very term of “king” is re-defined philosophically with characteristic repetitions of the key-words *rex* and *regnum* (*Thy.* 344–349 “Riches do not make a king... a king is he who has laid fear aside and the base longings of an evil heart... ‘tis the upright mind that holds true sovereignty... Such kingdom on himself each man bestows” (tr. Miller) *Regem non faciunt opes... / rex est qui posuit metus / et diri mala pectoris...*; 380 *mens regnum bona possidet <...>*; 390 *hoc regnum sibi quisque dat*. The end of the chorus has an Epicurean ring [393–395]: *me dulcis saturet quies; / obscuro positus loco / leni perfruar otio*). The song of the chorus prepares for and explains the bad forebodings of Thyestes (412–420; 423–428; 446–454; 483 f.) when returning from exile to his son Tantalus (who naively believes in the magnificence of *regnum* and in the honesty of his uncle Atreus). Thus there is an inversion of traditional values – strongly influenced by philosophy. In a Stoic vein, Thyestes is not afraid of speaking in paradoxes (454): “Evil fortune is to be preferred to good” (tr. Miller) *malam bonae praeferre fortunam licet*.<sup>29</sup> The

<sup>27</sup> R. Degli’Innocenti Pierini, *Tra filosofia e poesia. Studi su Seneca e dintorni* (Bologna 1999) 23–37 (“L’esilio nelle tragedie di Seneca. Autobiografia, meditazione filosofica, modelli letterari”).

<sup>28</sup> One should not call Thyestes a Stoic sage, rather a προκόπτων; but the philosophical elements in this play are evident. V. Pöschl (“Bemerkungen zum *Thyestes* des Seneca”, in: *Latinität und Alte Kirche. Festschrift R. Hanslik* [Wien 1977] 224–234 = V. Pöschl, *Kunst und Wirklichkeitserfahrung in der Dichtung... Kleine Schriften* [Heidelberg 1979] 311–319) considered the *satelles* a representative of Seneca.

<sup>29</sup> Paradox is an appropriate way of describing a world in which right and wrong, good and bad have changed places (E. Lefèvre, “Die Bedeutung des Paradoxen in der römischen Literatur der frühen Kaiserzeit”, *Poetica* 3 [1970] 60).

reader immediately recalls the last line of the *Epistulae morales* (124, 24): “Those whom the world calls fortunate are really the most unfortunate of all”: *infelicissimos esse felices*.

**Stylistic devices:** In some respects, the style of drama is more lively, more emotional than that of the philosophical works. Apostrophes are more frequent in the tragedies (*anime*, see pp. 140 ff.). Rhetorical questions with *egone ut* are found exclusively in his dramatic works (*Herc. f.* 372; *Med.* 398; 893; 929; *Oed.* 671). The interjection *o* appears both in Seneca's prose and poetry. In the philosophical writings, ready-made phrases (often in the accusative) are preferred (*o te [virum / hominem] felicem... o tristes ineptias!.. o quam... o quando..., o quanta..., o ne* [‘indeed’]). In the tragedies *o* with vocative (or nominative) takes a place of honour (partly favoured by the example of Greek tragedy). This construction is very rare in Seneca's prose; it appears in some poetic quotations (*Epist.* 107. 11 in a versified prayer after Cleanthes; *Epist.* 73. 10; cf. *Epist.* 76. 33: from Virgil) and in especially solemn apostrophes (*Epist.* 55. 3: “O Vatia, you are the only one who knows how to live” *O Vatia, solus scis vivere!*; cf. *Benef.* 2. 13. 1: “O Pride, the bane of great fortune and its highest folly” *O superbia, magnae fortunae stultissimum malum!*; *Nat.* 1. 17. 9: “Happy the poverty...” *O felix paupertas* [nom.]; *Apocol.* 12. 3. 31: “O advocates” *o causicidici* [mock-heroic]). *O* with vocative (or nominative) is avoided by Seneca in his prose more strictly than by Cicero, even in his orations.

Likewise, the use of the imperative *age* shows that Seneca tends to reserve the stronger means of expression for the tragedies: *age*, *anime* and *hoc age* are limited to the tragedies, whereas the prose writings exhibit ready-made phrases such as *id age*, *ut*; *age tuum negotium*; *age gratias*.

#### The use of patterns of thought in both genres: gradatio; Priamel

Behind the *gradatio* of Hercules first conquering “monsters” threatening him from outside and then conquering himself there is a philosophical idea. The very principle governing the development of this motif in the *Hercules furens*<sup>30</sup> is made explicit in *Herc. f.* 1275 f.: “Now regain that spirit of yours which is a match for any trouble, now you must act with great valour. Do not let Hercules give way to anger” (tr. Fitch) *Nunc tuum nulli imparem / animum malo resume, nunc magna tibi / virtute agendum est: Herculem irasci veta*. In the play, Juno's idea of having Hercules fight against himself (*Herc. f.* 85: “Now he must war with himself” [tr. Fitch] *bella iam secum gerat*) is first developed on a negative scale in the hero's

<sup>30</sup> M. v. Albrecht, *Wort und Wandlung. Senecas Lebenskunst* (Leiden 2004) 99–119.



killing his own family, then on a positive scale: Hercules overcomes his wrath and decides to go on living for his father's sake. The continuity is stressed by the hero himself (*Herc. f.* 1316 f.): *eat ad labores hic quoque Herculeus labor: / vivamus* (translation see below).

“Priamel” (*praeeambulum*) is a term denoting a series of examples followed by one's own choice. An example is *Herc. f.* 192–201: *Alium multis gloria terris / Tradat et omnes fama per urbes / Garrula laudet caeloque parem / Tollat et astris, // Alius curru sublimis eat: / Me mea tellus lare secreto / Tutoque tegat. // Venit ad pigros cana senectus, / Humilique loco sed certa sedet / Sordida parvae fortuna domus: / Alte virtus animosa cadit.* “Another may be carried to many countries by Renown; garrulous Rumour may praise him through every city, and raise him equal with the starry heavens; another may ride high in a chariot. For me, let my own land hide me in a safe and secluded home. White-haired old age comes to homebodies, and the ignominious fortunes of a small house have a lowly but firm foundation. Spirited valour falls from great height”.

This is how Seneca in a tragic chorus develops a stylistic pattern we know from Tibullus 1. 1 and Horace, *Carm.* 1. 1, for instance. As the last line shows, the theme is deliberately introduced as a contrast to the subject of the tragedy: the fall of the greatest hero.

A similar type of argument is found e. g. in *Epist.* 68. 10 f.: “Then you say: ‘Is it retirement, Seneca, that you are recommending to me? You will soon be falling back upon the maxims of Epicurus!’ I do recommend retirement to you, but only that you may use it for greater and more beautiful activities than those which you have resigned; to knock at the haughty doors of the influential, to make alphabetical lists of childless old men, to wield the highest authority in public life, – this kind of power exposes you to hatred, is short-lived, and, if you rate it at its true value, is tawdry. One man shall be far ahead of me as regards his influence in public life, another in salary as an army officer and in the position which results from this, another in the throng of his clients; but it is worth while to be outdone by all these men, provided that I myself can outdo Fortune”.

Both passages find their climax in a *sententia*. In the dramatic chorus, the *sententia* looks like a proverb; its character is contemplative (although it prepares the listener for the catastrophe to come, it is not meant to incite anyone to immediate action). While in the chorus the personal pronoun *me* stands in the centre of the text to underline the chorus' distance from political life, in the letter, the personal pronoun *a me* reinforces the final *sententia*. The *ego* takes a polemical stance towards other life-styles. In the drama, the course of events cannot be stopped, and the chorus does not try to do this; it only takes a resigning view of life in general. In the letter, Seneca insists on the scarcity of time and on the importance of making a

decision by now. While the singers of the chorus accept their own “poor” condition (*sordida*), in the letter the lifestyle of the others polemically gets the same epithet. Clearly in the letter the first step towards a metamorphosis of oneself through language is done by realizing the philosophical change of the significance of words.

On the other hand, in the letter, Seneca's language is more rational; in the dramatic chorus there is vivid description. In the letter, Seneca overtly discusses differences of philosophical schools (cf. “falling back upon the maxims of Epicurus”). In the letter, as is expected in prose, the grammatical subjects are mostly persons. Not before the last sentence is *fortuna* quasi personified, but even then only in the passive voice. In the drama *fortuna* (though poor) stands with the speaker; in the letter it is an enemy to be conquered. In the tragic chorus there is much more personification: abstract nouns are most frequently used as grammatical subjects and seem to act as allegorical figures: *gloria*, *fama*, *senectus*, *fortuna*, *virtus*. Liveliness is obtained here through *evidentia*, whereas the text of the letter is enlivened by means of dialogue, discussion, even polemic.

The use of linguistic and stylistic means for self-instruction:  
positive and negative

**Positive (“philosophical”) use:** The positive aim to be achieved is independent thought and an individual's construction of an inner world of his own.

(1) Words are the most important medium for Seneca's self-instruction.

(2) A first step is to change the meaning of words by philosophical reflection. These re-definitions – which in the view of Stoicism re-establish the true and original meaning<sup>31</sup> of a word – are often rather far from *consuetudo* (ordinary linguistic usage) and therefore may be shaped stylistically as paradoxes.<sup>32</sup> This is true, e. g., for the notions of “slave” and “free” (*Epist.*

<sup>31</sup> A. Setaioli, *Seneca e i greci* (Bologna 1988) 29.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. Cicero's *Paradoxa Stoicorum* 1, 4: *Quae quia sunt admirabilia contraque opinionem omnium – ab ipsis etiam παράδοξα appellantur – temptare volui possentne proferri in lucem et ita dici, ut probarentur ... – eoque hos locos scripsi libentius, quod mihi ista παράδοξα quae appellant maxime videntur esse Socratica longeque verissima.* Seneca uses the term twice. One instance is *Epist.* 87. 1. 2: *ne et hoc putes inter Stoica paradoxa ponendum, quorum nullum esse falsum nec tam mirabile quam prima facie videtur, cum volueris, adprobabo, immo etiam si nolueris* (this whole letter is on Stoic paradoxes concerning the true meaning of “good”, “richness”, “poverty”). The other instance of *paradoxum* is *Benef.* 2. 31. 1. 1: *Hoc ex paradoxis Stoicae sectae minime mirabile, ut mea fert opinio, aut incredibile est: eum, qui libenter accipit, beneficium reddidisse.* What counts is *voluntas*; if you expect a recompense for a good deed, this is no longer a *beneficium*, but an affair (*negotatio*).

47. 17): “‘He is a slave’. His soul, however, may be that of a freeman. ‘He is a slave’. But shall that stand in his way? Show me a man, who is not a slave; one is a slave to lust, another to greed, another to ambition, and all men slaves to hope and fear. I will name you an ex-consul who is slave to an old hag, a millionaire who is slave to a serving-maid... No servitude is more disgraceful than that which is self-imposed”.<sup>33</sup> The same applies to “happiness” and “unhappiness”. The point of the very last letter of the collection is this (*Epist.* 124. 24): “the fortunate are most unfortunate” *infelicissimos esse felices*. The same, of course, is true of “richness” (“riches are no good” *divitiae bonum non sunt: Epist.* 87. 28; “in whose minds bustling poverty has wrongly stolen the title of riches” *apud quos falso divitiarum nomen invasit occupata paupertas: Epist.* 119. 12) and “poverty”,<sup>34</sup> “friendship”,<sup>35</sup> “greatness” which should be inseparable from “being good” (*aut et bonum erit aut nec magnum: Clem.* 1. 20. 6 criticizing Livy *fr.* 66 Weissenborn–Müller),<sup>36</sup> also of “good”<sup>37</sup> and “evil”:<sup>38</sup> the only good is virtue (*unum ergo bonum ipsa virtus est: Epist.* 76. 21), and the term *malum* is wrongly applied to pain, imprisonment, exile, death. Actually these are only seeming evils (*Epist.* 82. 15 *habent mali speciem*), not real evils (*Epist.* 85. 25; 85. 30 and 41; cf. *Dial.* 1 (= *Prov.*) 3. 14 “These things of which I have deemed Cato worthy are not real ills”; they are indifferent, neither good nor bad (*Epist.* 82. 10). It is up to the philosopher to distinguish true evils from seeming ones (*Epist.* 90. 28; 110. 8). The change of the meaning of words causes a change in the philosopher’s perception of the world and of his life, to the point of reshaping his opinions and his mind.

(3) From the single word Seneca proceeds to the application of various stylistic means based on rhetorical forms of self-admonition and self-education. There are “logical” and “emotional” means of persuasion.

(3a) The first group encompasses deductive and inductive conclusions. The deductive form can be represented by a syllogism, which in its complete form is conclusive: All men are mortal. Socrates is a man. Therefore

<sup>33</sup> The passage is unified by words of the same root: *servus... servus... servit... servientem... servitus*.

<sup>34</sup> See v. Albrecht (n. 30) 33–52.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 55; I. Lana, “L’amicizia secondo Seneca”, in: G. Garbarino, I. Lana (eds.), *Incontri con Seneca. Atti della giornata di studio...* (Bologna 2001) 19–27.

<sup>36</sup> Seneca, however, does not always follow his own rule: *voces magnaе, sed detestabiles* (*Clem.* 2. 2. 2); *magna in illo ingenii vis est, sed iam tendentis in pravum* (*Epist.* 29. 4); *magnum... ingenium* of Antony (*Epist.* 83. 2), of Maecenas (*Epist.* 114. 4; cf. 92. 35 *grande*).

<sup>37</sup> For instance, *Epist.* 34. 3; 42. 1; 74. 16–17; 98. 9; *Dial.* 11 (= *Helv.*) 5. 6; 9. 2.

<sup>38</sup> E. g., *Epist.* 82. 2; *Dial.* 1 (= *Prov.*) 6. 1; *Dial.* 11 (= *Helv.*) 5. 6.

he is mortal. If we omit the second part ("Socrates is a man"), we get an abbreviated form, which is stylistically more elegant, but not compelling logically: the so-called enthymema, a rhetorical substitute for the syllogism.

The complementary method is induction: Romulus is mortal, Tullus is mortal, Servius is mortal, Tarquinius is mortal, etc. etc... All these are men. Therefore, all men are mortal. Since complete induction is never fully achieved anyway, the orator shortens this tiresome procedure by limiting himself to mentioning one example. Needless to say, the examples may impress the audience but prove nothing. However, more often than one would expect, Seneca uses complete syllogism (e. g. *Epist.* 82. 9 f.) and even raises pertinent objections against a syllogism of Zeno himself ("No evil is glorious; but death is glorious; therefore death is no evil"): as Seneca rightly objects, death is not glorious as such, but only if one dies courageously. When working on his *Moralis philosophiae libri* (cf. *Epist.* 106. 2; 108. 1; 109. 17; Lactantius, *Inst.* 1. 16. 10; 6. 17. 28), Seneca used his later letters increasingly as "preliminary exercise(s)" and "preliminary studies in dialectics".<sup>39</sup>

On the other hand, "what the world wants is strength of utterance, not precision of utterance".<sup>40</sup> Seneca feels that mere syllogisms are not liable to persuade living persons in a given situation (*Epist.* 82. 19): "But I for my part decline to reduce such questions to a matter of dialectical rules or to the subtleties of an utterly soulless system. Away, I say, with all that sort of thing, which makes a man feel, when a question is propounded to him, that he is hemmed in, and forces him to admit a premise and then makes him say one thing in his answer when his real opinion is another. When truth is at stake, we must act more frankly; and when fear is to be combated, we must act more bravely". He wants to persuade and convince people, not just compel them to confess something against their will: To conquer the fear of death, forget syllogisms; you had better remember *exempla* (such as the 300 Fabii) or brief maxims like the words of Leonidas before the battle at Thermopylae.

(3b) This brings us to the emotional means of persuasion: *ethos* and *pathos*. *Ethos* is largely extra-linguistic, based as it is on the relationship between teacher and pupil, on the mutual belief, that both sides are doing their best. So the teacher has to believe that the student is willing to learn, and the student has to believe firmly that the teacher does his best to in-

<sup>39</sup> A. D. Leeman, "Seneca's Plans for a Work *Moralis Philosophia* and their Influence on his later Epistles", *Mnemosyne* 6 (1953) 307–313.

<sup>40</sup> Jack London, justly quoted by A. Traina, *Lo stile drammatico del filosofo Seneca* (Bologna 1995) 25.

struct him. Otherwise, a learning process is not possible. (This is an important lesson from *Epist.* 108;<sup>41</sup> cf. also *Epist.* 118. 1: “However, I shall not be disagreeable; I know that it is safe to trust you” *sed non ero difficilis: bene credi tibi scio.*) Here, the teacher’s example and his behaviour in real life is even more important than what he says. These are certainly the best means to enhance the student’s respect for the teacher and for philosophy. However, *ethos* can and must find linguistic expression as well: To create a good atmosphere for learning, Seneca does not shrink from using religious speech<sup>42</sup> and conjuring up the poetic vision of a sacred grove (*Epist.* 41. 25), thus evoking a touch of *horror sacer*, though not to the point of frightening the student. Other linguistic means of *ethos* appear in Seneca’s friendly and patient ways of correcting the student’s errors without impairing his human dignity. Occasionally Seneca goes even further: in order not to intimidate Lucilius, he even avows his own imperfection, e. g. (*Epist.* 7. 1): “I shall admit my own weakness, at any rate; for I never bring back home the same character that I took abroad with me”.<sup>43</sup> And there is more (*Dial.* 7 [= *Vit. beat.*] 17. 3): “I am not a wise man, nor – to feed your malevolence – shall I ever be”.

Even *pathos* – linguistic and stylistic means liable to excite strong emotions – can be used in instruction, as Seneca shows. The teacher of philosophy is called in this context *advocatus* (*Epist.* 108. 12). And a sermon of the philosopher Attalus is described in terms of rhetoric as a “peroration” against vices (*Epist.* 108. 13: *Attalum... in vitia... perorantem*). In the following example (as referred by Seneca from Sotion) rhetorical devices such as anaphora and rhetorical questions abound (*Epist.* 108. 20): *non credis...? non credis...? non credis?* And the play on the same root goes on: *crediderunt... credulitatis*.

While such explicit forms of rhetoric are especially appropriate at an early (“exoteric”) stage when it is the teacher’s task to attract pupils to the study of philosophy, later on, in everyday personal advice and guidance (“esoteric” teaching), simple and straightforward speech is required. But even here, artistic elements are not excluded, especially brief, “condensed” statements<sup>44</sup> which can be learned and remembered easily: such *sententiae* are explicitly recommended, even in poetic form, as early as Cleanthes (translated by Seneca, *Epist.* 108. 10): “As our breath produces a louder sound when it passes through the long and narrow opening of the

<sup>41</sup> See v. Albrecht (n. 30) 88 f.

<sup>42</sup> *Videntem, ex aequo deos; vis... divina; caelestis potentia; numinis; sacer.*

<sup>43</sup> *Ego certe confiteor imbecillitatem meam: numquam mores, quos extuli, refero.*

<sup>44</sup> Examples are the quotations from Epicurus and others, as used in the first group of letters (1–29).

trumpet and escapes by a hole which widens at the end, even so the fettering rules of poetry clarify our meaning".<sup>45</sup> Seneca (who quotes poets frequently)<sup>46</sup> observes that the strictness of poetic form adds to the efficiency of the message (*Epist.* 108. 10): "When metre is added and when regular prosody has compressed a noble idea, then the selfsame thought comes, as it were, hurling with a fuller fling".<sup>47</sup> In this context he uses strong metaphors: "Our minds are struck" *feriuntur animi* (*Epist.* 108. 11), "strike home, charge them with this duty" *hoc preme, hoc onera* (*Epist.* 108. 12) to the point of belittling the importance of "double-meanings, syllogisms, hair-splitting and other side-shows of ineffective smartness".

Nor are other elements of rhetoric absent from this most private sphere of education, the dialogue between teacher and student and the student's dialogue with himself. An example is the first letter.<sup>48</sup> On a larger scale, there is *gradatio*.<sup>49</sup>

Negative use (*Medea*). Medea as a self-educator, a shaper of herself (or, if the reader prefers, of her self) applies a method quite similar to that adopted by the student of philosophy.

(1) Words are, again, a crucial means of self-instruction.

(2) Verbal procedures used here include re-definition of terms: In view of what she is planning now, Medea calls her previous crimes *pietas* (*quidquid admissum est adhuc / pietas vocetur: Med.* 904 f.). In the same perspective her (hitherto still moderate) hatred against Jason must be called 'love' (*amas adhuc: Med.* 897). This inversion of the original meaning of the word is a parallel procedure to what the philosopher is saying, e. g. about poverty and richness. A slightly more lenient way of changing one's attitude is the exchange of epithets. This way of manipulating one's own opinion is equally found both in the writings and the tragedies, though used to achieve contrary aims: Medea's former misdeeds (among which, not to forget, the murder of her brother) are "light" (*levia*) and "common" (*vulgaris notae: Med.* 906), "girlish" (*puellaris furor: Med.* 909), "preludes",

<sup>45</sup> *Quemadmodum spiritus noster clariorem sonum reddit, cum illum tuba per longi canalis angustias tractum patientiore novissime exitu effudit, sic sensus nostros clariores carminis arta necessitas efficit.*

<sup>46</sup> Especially Virgil is used to illustrate essential points (e. g. *Epist.* 76. 33 on the *praemeditatio futurorum malorum*; *Epist.* 78. 15 on remembering positive experiences; *Epist.* 108. 24–29 on the importance of time; *Epist.* 12. 3 on a dignified death (*vixi*); *Epist.* 48. 11 and 73. 5 on the true way to the stars). Another source of *sententiae* is, of course, Publilius Syrus (e. g. *Epist.* 108. 9).

<sup>47</sup> *Ubi accessere numeri et egregium sensum adstrinxere certi pedes, eadem illa sententia velut lacerto excussione torquetur.*

<sup>48</sup> See v. Albrecht (n. 30) 9–23.

<sup>49</sup> For a comparative study of tragedy and prose see e. g. *ibid.*, 112–119.

mere finger-exercises (cf. *prolusit... manus rudes: Med. 907 f.*). This is the perfect companion piece to the way the philosopher belittles pain (*Epist. 78. 13*: “Pain is slight if opinion has added nothing to it... ‘It is nothing, a trifling matter at most; keep a stout heart and it will soon cease’; then in thinking it slight, you will make it slight. Everything depends on opinion... It is according to opinion that we suffer”).<sup>50</sup> Of course, in the tragedies, terms such as “greatness” are used in a non-philosophical meaning (contrary to *Dial. 3 [= De ira 1]. 20. 6*). Atreus or Medea strive to achieve something extraordinarily “great”, even “greater” – typical is the comparative: “Greater crimes become me now, after giving birth” (tr. Fitch) *maiora iam me scelera post partus decent (Med. 50)*; “Some greater (*maius*) thing, larger (*amplius*) than the common and beyond the bounds (*supra fines*) of human use is swelling in my soul, and it urges on my sluggish hands – I know not what it is, but ‘tis some mighty thing (*grande quiddam*)” (*Thy. 267–270*, tr. Miller).

Since in philosophical admonition the idea is crucial that there is no time to be lost, Seneca even uses similar phrases in both genres: “Now break off sluggish delays” (tr. Fitch)  *rumpe iam segnes moras (Med. 54)*. Adjectives denoting idleness appear in tragic self-addresses and in the philosophical writings, e. g. *Dial. 10 [= Brev. vit.] 9. 3*: “Why... do you stretch before yourself months and years in long array, unconcerned (*securus*) and slow (*lentus*) though time flees so fast?” Medea addresses her *animus*: “Why are you slackening, my spirit?” *quid anime cessas? (Med. 895; cf. titubas 937)*. Iocasta addresses herself before her suicide (*Oed. 1024*): “Why are you benumbed, my soul?” *quid, anime, torpes? Dial. 10 [= Brev. vit.] 9. 2 quid cunctaris, inquit, quid cessas? Epist. 31. 7* “It is not enough if you do not shrink from work; ask for it... the very quality that endures toil and rouses itself to hard and uphill effort, is of the spirit, which says: ‘Why do you grow slack? It is not the part of a man to fear sweat’” *laborem si non recuses, parum est: posce... animi est ipsa tolerantia, quae se ad dura et aspera hortatur ac dicit: quid cessas? non est viri timere sudorem*. The fierce address to a hesitating friend is part of epic speech (Turnus to Drances: Verg. *Aen. 11. 389*; the Sibyl to Aeneas: *Aen. 6. 51 f.* “What? Slow to pay your vows and say your prayers?” (tr. C. Day Lewis) *cessas in vota precesque*: this rare Virgilian construction is the model for Seneca, *Med. 406*: “My rage will never slacken in seeking revenge” (tr. Fitch) *numquam meus cessabit in poenas furor*) or to a strong enemy; thus Hecuba provokes Pyrrhus to go on slaughtering old people and

<sup>50</sup> *Levis est dolor, si nihil ei opinio adiecerit... nihil est aut certe exiguum est, duremus; iam desinet: levem illum, dum putas, facies. Omnia ex opinione suspensa sunt... tam miser est quisque quam credit.*

kill her: "Pyrrhus, why hesitate?" (tr. Fitch) *Pyrrhe, quid cessas? Tro.* 1000. Likewise the philosopher provokes Fortune: cf. *Epist.* 64. 4 "Why keep me waiting, Fortune? Enter the lists! Behold, I am ready for you!" *quid cessas, fortuna? congregere: paratum vides* (an example of Seneca's "dramatic" style in his prose). Fierce admonition to commit a crime may also be part of a moralizing sermon; see the speech of the *nutrix* to Phaedra (*Phaedr.* 173 f.): "Go on, overturn nature with your wicked fires! Why do monsters (or: monstrous actions) cease?" (tr. Fitch/Miller, modified) *Perge et nefandis verte naturam ignibus; / cur monstra cessant? Cf. Tro.* 1002 "Unite the parents-in-law (of Achilles). Proceed, you butcher of the aged" (tr. Fitch) *coniunge soceros. perge, mactator senum...* This pattern often contains the imperative *i!*: this is the case in Juno's sardonic address to Hercules (*Herc. f.* 89 "Go ahead, proud man, aspire to the gods' abodes" (tr. Fitch) *i nunc, superbe, caelitum sedes pete*) and Medea's to Jason (*Med.* 1007: "Go on now, arrogant man, seek out virgins' bedrooms" *i nunc, superbe, uirginum thalamos pete*. Oedipus' self-addresses with *i!* express utmost despair (*Oed.* 880 f.: "Go, get you to the palace with hurrying feet; congratulate your mother" (tr. Miller, modified) *i, perge, propero regiam gressu pete: / gratare matri...*; *Oed.* 1051: "Go, speed you, fly! – but stop, lest you stumble and fall on your mother" (tr. Miller, modified) *i profuge vade – siste, ne in matrem incidas*).

In his prose, Seneca is equally ironical<sup>51</sup> about the scholar Didymus, who wrote 4000 books on irrelevant stuff (*Epist.* 88. 37: "Come now, do not tell me that life is long!" *i nunc et longam esse vitam nega!*), about a certain Hostius, who used mirrors during his sexual orgies (*Nat.* 1. 16. 3: "Go on now and say that the mirror was invented to touch up one's looks!" *i nunc et dic speculum munditiarum causa repertum*), about people who wish their benefactors mischief in order to get a great occasion to show them their gratitude (*Benef.* 6. 35. 5 "But go now and suppose that this is gratitude" *i nunc et hoc esse grati puta*), and about a snob who, after having been placed on a chair by his slaves, asked: "Am I sitting already?" (*Dial.* 10 [= *Brev. vit.*] 12. 8): "After this imagine that the mimes fabricate many things to make a mock of luxury!" *i nunc et mimos multa mentiri ad exprobrandam luxuriam puta*). A more friendly nuance is found in the same expression when – after a long series of proofs – a current prejudice is definitively dismissed; this is true of the fears of death and of poverty in *Dial.* 12 (= *Helv.*) 6. 8: "What folly, then, to think that the human mind... is troubled by journeying and changing its home" *i nunc et humanum animum (...) moleste ferre puta transitum; ibid., 10. 10* "What folly then to think that it is the

<sup>51</sup> A slightly different case is *Benef.* 4. 38. 2 in view of an exemplary punishment: *i, ostende, quam sacra res sit mensa hospitalis*.



amount of money and not the state of mind that matters” *i nunc et puta pecuniae modum ad rem pertinere, non animi*. For a similar use of *nunc*: *Epist.* 101. 14. Interestingly in most of the prose passages the lively imperative *i!* has been replaced by the translator with less colloquial expressions (“after this,” “what folly”).

The imperative *perge* has a similar function. *Medea* (566 f.) exhorts herself: “Press on! Now is the time for daring, and for undertaking all that *Medea* can do and all that she *cannot* do” (tr. Fitch) *perge, nunc aude, incipe / quidquid potest Medea, quidquid non potest*. Juno kindles her own rage by addressing it (*Herc. f.* 75: “Onward, my anger, onward! Crush this overreacher!” [tr. Fitch] *perge, ira, perge et magna meditantem opprime*).<sup>52</sup> *Atreus* exhorts himself to reveal everything to *Thyestes* (*Thy.* 892): “On! While heaven is tenantless” *dies recessit: perge dum caelum uacat*. The same imperative is found in philosophical exhortation (*Epist.* 76. 5): “Proceed then, *Lucilius*, and hasten, lest you yourself be compelled to learn in your old age, as is the case with me” *perge, Lucili, et propera, ne tibi accidat quod mihi, ut senex discas*. Further warnings against procrastination are found in *Epist.* 1. 3; *Dial.* 10 (= *Brev. vit.*) 4. 2. The imperative *occupa* (*Thy.* 270 *Hoc, anime, occupa*) can be compared to *Dial.* 10 (= *Brev. vit.*) 9. 2 *Nisi occupas, fugit*.

An effective means of stimulating oneself to action is self-address. Before declaring her incestuous love to *Hippolytus*, *Phaedra* speaks to her *animus*: *Phaedr.* 592 f.): *aude, anime, tempta, perage... constant; 599 incipe, anime!* So does *Phaedra*’s nurse before falsely accusing *Hippolytus* (*Phaedr.* 719): *anime, quid segnis stupes?* Similarly, before committing their crimes, *Medea* and *Atreus* direct to their *animus* entire series of imperative and hortative verbal forms (*Med.* 895–905); moreover, there appear rhetorical questions (*quid anime cessas?.. pars... quota est?: Med.* 895 f.; cf. also 908 f.; cf. *Thy.* 196–199). In *Medea* and *Thyestes* the self-addresses (*Thy.* 192 *anime*) come back later at crucial moments, when some hesitations emerge (*Thy.* 324 *male agis, recedis, anime; Med.* 937 *quid, anime, titubas?*). On the other hand, in such situations heroes bid virtues good-bye: *excede, pietas* (*Thy.* 249). Furthermore, when urging himself to commit his deed, *Atreus* uses an entire chain of adjectives in vocative form (*Thy.* 176–178): *ignave*,<sup>53</sup> *iners, enervis et... inulte*. *Neronian* gigantism ravel in generalizing notions like (*Thy.* 180–188) *totus... orbis... agros et urbis... undique... tota... tellus... totus... populus... quisquis*. On a more general scale, *gradatio* is used (*Thy.* 193–195) *nefas / atrox, cruentum*

<sup>52</sup> The situation is different in *Tro.* 630 *bene est: tenetur. perge, festina, attrahe*.

<sup>53</sup> Similarly, *Clytaemnestra* blames herself as *pigra* (*Ag.* 193).

(and what is much more): *tale quod frater meus / suum esse mallet*. Exaggeration can border on absurdity: here *frater* is no longer the epitome of love, but of murderous, even suicidal hatred: by re-defining words and turning values upside down, Seneca presents us here an inverted mirroring of edifying philosophical re-definitions. Determined as he is to annihilate his brother Thyestes, Atreus does not even shrink from self-destruction (*Thy.* 190 f.): “This mighty palace itself, illustrious Pelops’ house, may it even fall on me, if only on my brother, too, it fall” (tr. Miller) *Haec ipsa pollens incliti Pelopis domus / ruat vel in me, dummodo in fratrem ruat*. The same is true of Clytaemnestra (*Ag.* 202): “death has no pang when shared with whom you would” (tr. Miller, modified) *mors misera non est commori cum quo velis*. In this line of thought, *scelus* becomes something desirable (*Thy.* 203). Passion takes possession of the entire person: the leading emotion (*ira*) is made an epithet (*iratus Atreus: Thy.* 118); Atreus is completely imbued with anger. Even reason falls under the sway of rage: a ‘rational’ excuse for yielding to destructive emotions is the idea of a “preventive war” (*Thy.* 201–204): “Therefore, ere he strengthen himself or marshal his powers, we must begin the attack, lest, while we wait, the attack be made on us. Slay or be slain will he; between us lies the crime for him who first shall do it” (tr. Miller) *proinde antequam se firmat aut vires parat, / petatur ultro, ne quiescentem petat. / Aut perdet aut peribit: in medio est scelus / positum occupanti*. Cf. *Ag.* 193 *scelus occupandum est*. Interestingly, in Seneca’s tragedies an irrational state of mind is often obtained and artfully maintained by means of rational techniques of meditation. Seneca’s tragedies are not “didactic plays”; what they give, is a sober analysis of the vast potentialities of the human mind.

In both genres, prose and tragedy, Seneca’s use of similar stylistic means is based on analogous rhetorical techniques. However, explicit address to the *animus* is limited to the tragedies – with only one exception (*Dial.* 1 [= *Prov.*] 2. 10): “Essay, my soul, the task long planned; deliver yourself from human affairs” *aggredere, anime, diu meditatatum opus, eripe te rebus humanis*. Actually, there is no exception: Cato is imagined here as the hero of a tragedy. This accounts for the use of tragic speech. On the other hand, reflexive use of *eripere* is also found in the Letters (*Epist.* 19. 1): “If possible, withdraw yourself from all the business of which you speak; and if you cannot do this, tear yourself away” *si potes, subduc te istis occupationibus, si minus, eripe*; *Epist.* 80. 4 “But what better thing could you wish for than to break away from this slavery, a slavery that oppresses us all?” *quid autem melius potes velle quam eripere te huic servituti, quae omnes premit*.

To see how self-admonition is shaped individually in each single case, let us look at an example in more detail (*Med.* 41): “My spirit, if you are

alive, if there is any of your old energy left” (tr. Fitch) *si uiuis, anime, si quid antiqui tibi / remanet vigoris*. Medea wants to fill her *animus* with strength (*Med.* 42 f.): “Drive out womanish fears, and plant the forbidding Caucasus in your mind” (tr. Fitch) *pelle femineos metus / et inhospitalem Caucasum mente indue*. These are specific admonitions to a woman from Colchis: she should forget her female nature, but on the other hand remember the roughness of her homeland. In an important *gradatio* she exhorts herself to surpass the misdeeds of her youth (*Med.* 49 f.): “I did all this as a girl. My bitterness must grow more weighty (*gravior*): greater (*maiora*) crimes become me now, after giving birth” (tr. Fitch). This is a systematic mental exercise in *ira* and *furor*. As for content, we are here at the antipodes of the philosophical writings, which strive to overcome such emotions. But the rhetorical methods of self-manipulation are very much the same as those of philosophical self-education.

Further apostrophes to *animus* are found before and in the last scene. In line 976 f. Medea encourages herself to make her crime publicly known: “To work now, my spirit! You must not waste your valour in obscurity” (tr. Fitch) *nunc hoc age, anime: non in occulto tibi est / perdenda virtus*. Involuntarily, Medea reveals here the anti-philosophical aim of her actions: *perdenda virtus*.

The next address to *animus* comes at a moment when Medea’s wrath has begun to calm down (*Med.* 988 f.): “Why delay now, my spirit? Why hesitate? Has your powerful anger already flagged?” To light anew the dying flame of hatred, she appeals to a further strong emotion: cruelty. Against the voices of shame and repentance, Medea stubbornly persists in her pursuit, relishing in the terrible pleasure of torturing the unhappy father of her children (*Med.* 991 “A great sense of pleasure steals over me unbidden” [tr. Fitch] *voluptas magna me invitam subit*). The numerous apostrophes to *animus* in this tragedy are crowned towards the end by two addresses to *dolor* (*Med.* 1016 f. “Relish your crime in leisure, my pain, do not hurry” [tr. Fitch] *perfruere lento scelere, ne propera, dolor*), a line very close in content to the above description of *voluptas*, and 1019 f. “I had no more to offer you, my pain, in atonement” (tr. Fitch) *plura non habui, dolor, / quae tibi litarem* (note the ritual vocabulary). An instructive parallel from the writings is Seneca’s apostrophe to Pain (*dolor*): “Slight thou art, if I can bear thee; short thou art, if I cannot bear thee” *levis es, si ferre possum; brevis es, si ferre non possum* (*Epist.* 24. 14). In the philosophical writings, passion has to be overcome, whereas in the tragedies it is even an object of cult (cf. the sacrificial vocabulary in *Med.* 1020).

Similarly, other emotions or virtues may be personified and addressed. In Seneca’s tragedy, Hercules apostrophizes his *virtus* (*Herc. f.* 1315): “Give way, my valour, endure my father’s command” (tr. Fitch) *succumbe*

*virtus, perfer imperium patris*. Here the hero suppresses what in everyday speech is called *virtus* (“manly behaviour”) for the sake of *pietas*, which is combined with a nobler type of *virtus* (cf. the chorus’ words: *Herc. fur.* 1093 f. “may the hero’s goodness and heroism return” (tr. Fitch) *redeat pietas / virtusque viro*).

In Seneca’s as in Greek tragedies the philosophical point of view is often articulated by the chorus or by ordinary people (a nurse, a guardian). In Jason’s case the philosophical advice he gives to Medea<sup>54</sup> is especially tedious, since it is he who caused her hopeless situation. Sometimes Seneca goes further than Greek tragedy, including, for instance, Stoic or Epicurean ideas. All this serves as a foil and brings to the fore the contrary orientation of the protagonists’ mind (Atreus, Medea, Phaedra), their dedication to committing crimes unheard of.

The distortion of the philosophical path into its opposite is ironically spelled out in Medea’s words (*Med.* 1022): “A path has opened to heaven” (tr. Fitch) *patuit in caelum via*. In a literal sense, this is true for Medea: she flees through the air on her magic chariot. A close parallel is Theseus, who says about himself (*Phaedra* 1213): “Was a path opened to the upper world?” *patuit ad caelum via?* The context implies, of course, that his return from the netherworld was useless. When Hercules in his madness wants to attack the mansions of the skies (*Herc. f.* 972), this irrational attempt is doomed to failure. Instead, the conqueror of monsters – as a next step – must conquer himself. The questionable “way to heaven” through glory on earth (*Herc. f.* 194 f. “and raise him equal with the starry heavens” [tr. Fitch] *caeloque parem / tollat et astris*) had been belied by the Epicurean wisdom of the chorus in the same play (see above p. 132). As Seneca puts it in several letters,<sup>55</sup> the true path to the skies – accessible from the

<sup>54</sup> *Med.* 537–558; on this, v. Albrecht (n. 30) 120–122.

<sup>55</sup> *Epist.* 31. 11 *subsilire in caelum ex angulo licet. Exsurge modo ‘et te quoque dignum / finge deo’*. *Finges autem non auro nec argento: non potest ex hac materia imago deo exprimi similis; cogita illos, cum propitii essent, fictiles fuisse*. Cf. also *Epist.* 67. 7 *calix venenatus, qui Socratem transtulit e carcere in caelum*. *Epist.* 72. 9 *hic deprimitur alternis et extollitur ac modo in caelum adlevatur, modo defertur ad terram*. *Epist.* 73. 12: *te compendiaro in caelum voco. Solebat Sextius dicere Iovem plus non posse quam bonum virum*. Philosophy is *otium, quod inter deos agitur, quod deos facit* (*Epist.* 73. 11). Cf. *Epist.* 86. 1: *Animum quidem eius (scil. Scipionis) in caelum, ex quo erat, redisse persuadeo mihi, non quia magnos exercitus duxit, ... sed ob egregiam moderationem pietatemque*. Furthermore, *Epist.* 92. 30 f. *Quemadmodum corporum nostrorum habitus erigitur et spectat in caelum, ita animus, cui in quantum vult, licet porrigi, in hoc a natura factus est, ut paria diis vellet. Et si utatur suis viribus, ac se in spatium suum extendat, non aliena via ad summa nititur*. (31) *Magnus erat labor ire in caelum: redit*. Here enters the re-definition of power and riches.

farthest nook, even from prison – is shown by philosophy: transformation of words and meanings – in order to shape oneself (*te ... finge: Epist.* 31. 11) – by means of a rational approach. And there is more: *Ratio* is supported by *pietas* (“and mold thyself to be worthy of godhead” Verg. *Aen.* 8. 364 f. *et te quoque dignum / finge deo* quoted *Epist.* 31. 11; cf. *Epist.* 86. 1 on Scipio’s *pietas*); in the case of Hercules, the humane aspect of *pietas* appears in his loving obedience to his father, which rightly leads him to reject even what might seem to be heroic *virtus* (*Herc. f.* 1315–1317). Thus he avoids suicide – a great temptation indeed for a Stoic – and chooses the thorny path of humanity and humility. *Pietas*, so grievously hurt by Hercules’ murders, is finally re-established. This ending is all the more moving as it lacks the usual Stoic bravery and boastfulness. As Seneca, for his caring father’s sake, gave up the idea of killing himself, so does Hercules in his play (*Herc. f.* 1315–1317): “Give way, my valour, endure my father’s command. This labour must be added to the Herculean labours: to live” (tr. Fitch).<sup>56</sup> This passage finds a clear parallel in *Epist.* 78. 2, where Seneca speaks of his chronic sickness, the sufferings of which drove him almost to suicide (a step allowed by Stoic philosophy): “I often entertained the impulse of ending my life then and there; but the thought of my kind old father kept me back. For I reflected, not how bravely I had the power to die, but how little power he had to bear bravely the loss of me. And so I commanded myself to live. For sometimes it is even an act of bravery to live”.<sup>57</sup> The elderly father’s inability to bear his son’s death is graphically expressed in the drama (*Herc. f.* 1308–1313): “I am holding on my very lips this fragile life of mine, wearied with old age and no less wearied with troubles: Can anyone be so slow in granting his father life? (*Taking a sword*) I shall not endure further delay, I shall set my breast against the deadly blade and thrust it in. Here, here shall I lie – the crime of a *sane* Hercules” (tr. Fitch/Miller). The parallel is instructive not so much for the biographical background it reveals as for the fact that we find a similar idea

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*Animum impleri debere, non arcam. Hunc imponere dominio rerum omnium licet, hunc in possessionem rerum naturae inducere, ut sua orientis occidentisque terminis finiat deorumque ritu cuncta possideat.* There follows a re-definition of freedom (*Epist.* 92. 33): *Nemo liber est, qui corpori servit.*

<sup>56</sup> *Succumbe, virtus* [another address to *virtus: Herc. f.* 1156], *perfer imperium patris. / eat ad labores hic quoque Herculeus labor: / vivamus.*

<sup>57</sup> *Saepe impetum cepi abrumpendae vitae: patris me indulgentissimi senectus retinuit. Cogitavi enim non quam fortiter ego mori possem, sed quam ille fortiter desiderare non posset. Itaque imperavi mihi, ut viverem: aliquando enim et vivere fortiter facere est.* The idea recurs in *Medea* (1018). *Iason: Infesta, memet perime. Medea: Misereri iubes.* For Jason, life is a more cruel punishment than death. This is an intriguing case of “re-definition” – in a negative vein.

expressed in two different genres. Actually there is a marked difference in style. In the drama, the father's resolution to kill himself in his turn, should his son die, is amply developed in a speech and underlined by a theatrical gesture, which, in its turn, provokes the son's decision to take upon himself the burden of living, a decision expressed in the drama by an apostrophe to *virtus* (1315). We know that apostrophe is more frequent in Seneca's dramas than in his philosophical writings. This dramatic dialogue is absent from the philosophical text. Instead, the father's and the son's thoughts are condensed into a single antithesis: *Cogitavi enim non quam fortiter ego mori possem, sed quam ille fortiter desiderare non posset*. Seneca the philosopher incapsulates in one sentence the quintessence of his father's and his own reflections. In this case, the avoidance of theatrical apparatus for the sake of a more intellectual approach is quite evident. Therefore, the general description of Seneca's style as "dramatic" – though helpful in many cases – should be modified.

#### Epilogue: Seneca's ideas on language and style<sup>58</sup>

A general problem behind Seneca's use of language and style is addressed in two contrary ways: Traina<sup>59</sup> maintains that Romans were unsystematic in their approach to life (which is true even of their special field: Roman Law), whereas according to Maurach,<sup>60</sup> Seneca carefully hides his systematic approach behind an unsystematic facade. Each of them, in his way, overstates a true principle. Seneca's use of language and style in the service of his philosophical aims is so deliberate that more general reflections on his part cannot be excluded reasonably, though it would be an exaggeration to term them 'systematic,' as far as we can judge from the writings that have come down to us. As for ethics, it would be helpful if we had the *Moralis philosophiae libri*. For style, his scattered remarks in the *Letters to Lucilius* are sometimes contradictory, but not irreconcilable.<sup>61</sup>

What Seneca thought about style appears rather clearly from his statements on "imitation" ("intertextuality"). In his view, a writer may be learned and original at the same time: although bees collect pollen from all kinds of flowers, the honey they produce is all their own (*Epist.* 84. 3–5, esp. 5). Lucilius wrote about Aetna, as had done Virgil, Ovid, and Cornelius Severus (*Epist.* 79. 5–6);<sup>62</sup> in Seneca's view, this epigonal situation is even

<sup>58</sup> Basic: Setaioli (n. 5).

<sup>59</sup> Traina (n. 40) 102.

<sup>60</sup> G. Maurach, *Der Bau von Senecas Epistulae morales* (Heidelberg 1970) 177–179.

<sup>61</sup> Setaioli (n. 5).

<sup>62</sup> *Epist.* 79 mentions many aspects of the theory of *imitatio* prevailing in antiquity; cf. H. Flashar, "Die klassizistische Theorie der Mimesis", in: *Le classicisme à Rome*

an advantage: “And those who have gone before seem to me not to have forestalled all that could be said, but merely to have opened the way”... (6) “He who writes last has the best of the bargain; he finds already at hand words which, when marshalled in a different way, show a new face. And he is not pilfering them, as if they belonged to someone else, when he uses them, for they are common property”. For Seneca, the use of material from earlier writers is no impediment to originality, even in a purely literary sense.

*Sententiae*. The same is even more true in a moral sense (*Epist.* 16. 7): “All that has been said well by anyone, is mine”. His use of quotations from Epicurus, Virgil, or whomever, is not merely a question of literary imitation or ‘intertextuality’; striking *sententiae* from poetry or prose are a first-rate instrument of philosophical education. But how does one make a quoted sentence or maxim really “one’s own”? One should live it, not just pronounce it (*Epist.* 108. 38). Style, therefore, is ultimately a problem of character.<sup>63</sup> Of course, Seneca keeps his distance from slavish imitators (*Epist.* 114. 18). Contrary to an inveterate prejudice, our author (at least in theory) is an enemy of authors who are fond of mannerisms (*ibid.*, 21): “They put up even with censure, provided that they can advertise themselves. That is the style of Maecenas and all the others that stray from the path, not by hazard, but consciously and voluntarily”. This is an evil that springs from the mind. Inappropriate style bespeaks a weak *animus* (*ibid.*, 22 f.). Such a moralistic approach to style shows also from his criticism of Ovid (*Nat.* 3. 27. 13–15). Of course, similar objections could be – and have been – raised against Seneca.<sup>64</sup>

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*aux I<sup>ers</sup> siècles avant et après J.-C.*, Entretiens Fondation Hardt 25 (Vandœuvres – Genève 1979) 79–111.

<sup>63</sup> Scholars are again and again suprised that Seneca notes in others the stylistic defects he does not avoid himself. Given human nature the contrary would be more of a surprise.

<sup>64</sup> On Seneca’s style: “Luxus verdirbt den Stil, sagt Seneca. / Er mußte es wissen”. Durs Grünbein, *Seneca Thyestes deutsch* (Frankfurt a. M. 2002) 172. Ancient critics: Caligula apud Suet. *Calig.* 53. 2 *arena sine calce*. Quint. *Inst.* 10. 1. 125–131 *ex industria Senecam in omni genere eloquentiae distuli propter vulgatam falso de me opinionem, qua damnare eum et invisum quoque habere sum creditus. quod accidit mihi, dum corruptum et omnibus vitiis fractum* (cf. *Dial.* 7 [= *Vit. beat.*] 13. 4 *qui voluptatem sequitur, videtur enervis, fractus* and *Epist.* 112. 1 [*amicus tuus*] *consuetudine mala ac diutina fractus*) *dicendi genus revocare ad severiora iudicia contendo*. (126) *tum autem solus hic fere in manibus adulescentium fuit. quem non equidem omnino conabar excutere, sed potioribus praeferri non sinebam, quos ille non destiterat incessere, cum diversi sibi conscius generis placere se in dicendo posse iis, quibus illi placent, diffideret. amabant autem eum magis quam imitabantur tantumque ab eo defluebant, quantum ille ab antiquis descenderat*. (127) *foret enim optandum pares ac*

On a more general scale, Seneca discusses the problem *talis oratio qualis vita*<sup>65</sup> in his *Epist.* 114 and 115. Behind Seneca's evaluations of the styles of Fabianus<sup>66</sup> and Maecenas,<sup>67</sup> there is the Stoic idea of "following nature".<sup>68</sup> Both these examples illustrate two contrasting aspects of what could be called "natural style". Fabianus was "not one of those modern theorizers, but a philosopher of the true and old kind" (*Dial.* 10 [= *Brev. vit.*] 10. 1); his discourse was free from rhetorical adornments. Such a view of "natural"<sup>69</sup> style is in harmony with old Stoicism. A totally different case is Maecenas' style, which (while reflecting his individual nature, i. e. his imperfections and

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*saltem proximos illi viro fieri. sed placebat propter sola vitia et ad ea se quisque dirigebat effingenda quae poterat; deinde cum se iactaret eodem modo dicere, Senecam infamabat.* (128) *cuius et multae alioqui et magnae virtutes fuerunt, ingenium facile et copiosum, plurimum studii, multa rerum cognitio; in qua tamen aliquando ab his, quibus inquirenda quaedam mandabat, deceptus est.* (129) *tractavit etiam omnem fere studiorum materiam. nam et orationes eius et poemata et epistolae et dialogi feruntur. in philosophia parum diligens, egregius tamen vitiorum insectator fuit. multae in eo claraeque sententiae, multa etiam morum gratia legenda; sed in eloquendo corrupta pleraque atque eo perniciosissima, quod abundant dulcibus vitiis.* (130) *velles eum suo ingenio dixisse, alieno iudicio. nam si obliqua [coni. Wölfflin : simile quam B ; si aliqua manus secunda], contempsisset, si parum recta [add. Peterson] non concupivisset, si non omnia sua amasset, si rerum pondera minutissimis sententiis non fregisset, consensu potius eruditorum quam puerorum amore comprobaretur.* (131) *verum sic quoque iam robustis et severiore genere satis firmatis legendus vel ideo quod exercere potest utrinque iudicium. multa enim, ut dixi, probanda in eo, multa etiam admiranda sunt, eligere modo curae sit; quod utinam ipse fecisset. digna enim fuit illa natura, quae meliora vellet; quod voluit effecit.* Fronto, p. 149. 13 f. Van den Hout (Leiden 1954) *Senecae mollibus et febriculosus prunuleis*; Gell. 12. 2. 1 *de Annaeo Seneca partim existimant ut de scriptore minime utili, cuius libros attingere nullum pretium operae sit, quod oratio eius vulgaria (sic) videatur et protrita, res atque sententiae aut inepto inanique impetu sint aut levi et quasi dicaci argutia, eruditio autem vernacula et plebeia nihilque ex veterum scriptis habens neque gratiae neque dignitatis. alii vero elegantiae quidem in verbis parum esse non infitias eunt, sed et rerum, quas dicat, scientiam doctrinamque ei non deesse dicunt et in vitiis morum obiurgandis severitatem gravitatemque non invenustam.*

<sup>65</sup> M. Möller, *Talis oratio – qualis vita. Zu Theorie und Praxis mimetischer Verfahren in der griechisch-römischen Literaturkritik* (Heidelberg 2004).

<sup>66</sup> Chrysippus (while stressing the importance of rhetorical performance / *actio*) was indifferent to stylistic niceties, admitting hiatus and even soloecism (*apud* Plut. *De Stoic. repugn.* 28. 1047 A–B = *SVF* 2. 297–298).

<sup>67</sup> *Epist.* 101. 10–15 criticizes lines of Maecenas only for their content (adherence to life, fear of death).

<sup>68</sup> Setaioli (n. 5) 812 f. (on a Stoic doctrine expounded and criticized by Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *De compositione verborum* 4–5).

<sup>69</sup> Fabianus' words were not *huius saeculi more contra naturam suam posita et inversa* (*Epist.* 100. 5).



affectations) was monstrous, and therefore ultimately unnatural (*orationis portentosissimae deliciis: Epist.* 114. 7). However, being natural is not a synonym of artlessness. In the Stoics' view, the individual's nature is perfected by art, thus getting closer to Nature (with a capital letter), that is to say, *ratio*.<sup>70</sup> There is analogy, therefore, between ethics and literature, and in Seneca's view a careful style is not to be condemned a priori.

Had Seneca possessed only ability and imagination, and not, in addition, a more severe taste than Quintilian was prepared to admit, he would neither have become the "second founder"<sup>71</sup> of Latin prose nor the father of the European tradition of the essay.<sup>72</sup> More significantly still, once rediscovered by Justus Lipsius as a Stoic and as a writer, Seneca, the 'classic' of non-classical prose, became the patron saint of the liberation of modern languages from 'periodic style'.

Seneca's reflections on language and style go beyond older rhetorical traditions; unlike Dionysius of Halicarnassus and Quintilian, Seneca does not recommend the reading of many authors of all kinds.<sup>73</sup> Some points are strikingly 'modern'; most of them are probably in agreement with Panaetius:<sup>74</sup> no insistence on unattainable ideals, a high evaluation of individual features even against an established model, avoidance of blind imitation, care for developing one's own nature. It should be kept in mind, however, that for Seneca 'nature' is not irrational, but rational. The fact that in Seneca *imitatio* amounts to organic cultural education recalls Panaetius' idea of *sapere* as the source of good oratory and poetry.<sup>75</sup> The same is true of the value placed on the relationship between literature and ethics.

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<sup>70</sup> The human soul is part of the cosmic fire or of the cosmic *pneuma* (*Epist.* 41. 2 *sacer intra nos spiritus*) which possesses *logos* and is therefore able to strive 'homeward' (*Dial.* 11 [= *Helv.*] 11. 6–8; *Epist.* 65. 16; 79. 12); but it needs to be admonished.

<sup>71</sup> A.-M. Guillemin, "Sénèque, second fondateur de la prose latine", *REL* 35 (1957) 265–284.

<sup>72</sup> H. Cancik, *Untersuchungen zu Senecas epistulae morales* (Hildesheim 1967) 91–101.

<sup>73</sup> *Epist.* 2; v. Albrecht (n. 30) 24–30; *Dial.* 9 (= *Tranq.*) 9. 4–7 (books as ornaments of walls); *Epist.* 27. 5 (learned slaves – a substitute for education?); 88 (*de liberalibus studiis*); 106. 11–12 (*litterarum ... intemperantia laboramus*); Mazzoli (n. 3) 11–14.

<sup>74</sup> Setaioli (n. 5) 856.

<sup>75</sup> Cic. *Orator* 70; Hor. *Ars* 309; G. T. A. Krüger in his edition of Horace's *Satires and Epistles* (Leipzig <sup>8</sup>1876, ad loc., p. 330 f.) comments: "richtige Einsicht in allen nur denkbaren Beziehungen; also nicht der von den Genieaffen für das Höchste gehaltene *furor poeticus*" (cf. Hor. *Ars* 295–301).

Детальный обзор языка и стиля Сенеки Младшего (часть I см. *Hyperbo-reus* 14:1) подводит итоги их изучения в научной литературе последних десятилетий и исследований самого автора. Основываясь на суждениях теоретического характера в произведениях Сенеки и одновременно проверяя их его собственной писательской практикой, автор показывает ошибочность или упрощенность многих устоявшихся суждений: так, трактовка стиля Сенеки как сознательно антицицероновского требует многих поправок – расхожее противопоставление кратких предложений Сенеки периодам Цицерона не учитывает особенностей стиля не только писем, но и поздних речей последнего. Преувеличено и представление о злоупотреблении поэтической лексикой в прозе Сенеки. Даже изобилие буквальных повторений, вызывавшее обвинения в монотонности, служит в действительности средством соединения кратких предложений и нередко создает, вместе с тем, эмоциональный эффект. Стиль Сенеки на поверку показывает разнообразие – и в синтаксическом, и в лексическом плане – даже в рамках одного и того же произведения. Несмотря на склонность к разговорным выражениям в прозе, сохраняющей личный тон, Сенека избегает “низкого стиля”, возвышенного же достигает не выпяченными выражениями, но самим содержанием и кажущейся простотой.

Применительно к письмам правильнее было бы говорить о тоне не проповедника, а личного советчика, избегающего риторических приемов, каскада слов и чрезмерного напора. Наличие теоретических оснований (*decreta*), в согласии со стоическим принципом, отличает философские наставления Сенеки от моральной парэнезы, содержащей лишь правила поведения (*praescepta*) и имеющей пропедевтическое значение. Сознательное отношение к выбору слов у Сенеки неразрывно связано с теоретической составляющей его наставлений.

Влияние риторики, в соответствии со вкусами той эпохи, заметно в “драматическом” синтаксисе, характерном и для трагедий, и для прозы Сенеки, и в обилии сентенций; эпиграмматический стиль прозы (предварительная часть длиннее, чем неожиданное разрешение) восходит к литературной и философской традиции. Обилие синонимов и квази-синонимов – не стилистическая прихоть, но часть стратегии убеждения, их расположение следует принципу “градации” и оказывается частью арсенала риторических средств, используемых для достижения философских целей.

Сопоставляя стиль философских произведений Сенеки и его трагедий (часть II), автор указывает на единство риторической техники в обоих жанрах, особенно заметной там, где речь персонажей или автора направлена на убеждение. Между трагедией и философией точки соприкосновения обнаруживаются и в форме, и в содержании, при этом сходные стилистические средства нередко преследуют в двух этих жанрах различные цели. Так, сентенции, в прозе имеющие воспитательное значение, в драмах служат лишь диалектическим средством в полемике. Стоиче-

ские и эпикурейские идеи играют большую роль в трагедиях Сенеки в сравнении с его предшественниками, в их свете нередко подвергаются пересмотру господствующие представления. Разнообразие языковых и стилистических средств, основанных на риторической технике, является общим для поэзии и прозы. Детальный анализ показывает, однако, типичные для каждого из двух жанров предпочтения. Так, для философии характерно переосмысление обыденных понятий, использование умозаключений в соединении с эмоциональными средствами воздействия (“этос” и “пафос”) для воспитания подопечного. В трагедии, напротив, аналогичные приемы рациональной медитации используются для стимулирования героем в самом себе иррациональных состояний и основанных на них поступков (Медея, Федра). В этом плане трагедии Сенеки скорее являются картину возможностей человеческой психологии, чем являются “дидактическими драмами”, как их обычно понимают. Само понятие “драматического” стиля прозы Сенеки требует уточнения в свете сопоставления с его трагедиями: то, что передается в трагедии посредством эффектных описаний, в философской прозе достигается посредством емкой формулировки (ср. отказ Геракла от самоубийства и аналогичное решение самого Сенеки в молодости).