

## THE EPISTLES OF SENECA

- 11 Finem constitue, quem transire ne velis quidem,<sup>1</sup> si possis; discedant aliquando ista insidiosa bona et sperantibus meliora quam adsecutis. Si quid in illis esset solidi, aliquando et inplerent; nunc haurientium sitim concitant. Mittantur<sup>2</sup> speciosi apparatus. Et quod futuri temporis incerta sors volvit, quare potius a fortuna inpetrem, ut det, quam a me, ne petam? Quare autem petam? Oblitus fragilitatis humanae congeram? In quid laborem? Ecce hic dies ultimus est. Ut non sit; prope ab ultimo est.  
VALE.

### XVI.

#### SENECA LVCILIO SVO SALVTEM

- 1 Liquere hoc tibi, Lucili, scio, neminem posse beate vivere, ne tolerabiliter quidem sine sapientiae studio et beatam vitam perfecta sapientia effici, ceterum tolerabilem etiam inchoata. Sed hoc, quod liquet, firmandum et altius cotidiana meditatione figendum est; plus operis est in eo, ut proposita custodias quam ut honesta proponas. Perseverandum est et adsiduo studio robur addendum, donec bona  
2 mens sit quod bona voluntas est. Itaque tibi apud me pluribus verbis aut adfirmatione iam<sup>3</sup> nil opus;

<sup>1</sup> *ne possis quidem si velis* MSS.; order corrected by Gertz.

<sup>2</sup> *mittantur* Madvig; *imitantur* MSS.

<sup>3</sup> *adfirmatione iam* Madvig; *adfirmatis nec tam (multum L) longis* MSS.

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Fix a limit which you will not even desire to pass, should you have the power. At last, then, away with all these treacherous goods! They look better to those who hope for them than to those who have attained them. If there were anything substantial in them, they would sooner or later satisfy you; as it is, they merely rouse the drinkers' thirst. Away with fripperies which only serve for show! As to what the future's uncertain lot has in store, why should I demand of Fortune that she give, rather than demand of myself that I should not crave? And why should I crave? Shall I heap up my winnings, and forget that man's lot is unsubstantial? For what end should I toil? Lo, to-day is the last; if not, it is near the last. Farewell.

### XVI. ON PHILOSOPHY, THE GUIDE OF LIFE

It is clear to you, I am sure, Lucilius, that no man can live a happy life, or even a supportable life, without the study of wisdom; you know also that a happy life is reached when our wisdom is brought to completion, but that life is at least endurable even when our wisdom is only begun. This idea, however, clear though it is, must be strengthened and implanted more deeply by daily reflection; it is more important for you to keep the resolutions you have already made than to go on and make noble ones. You must persevere, must develop new strength by continuous study, until that which is only a good inclination becomes a good settled purpose. Hence you no longer need to come to me with much talk and protestations; I know that you

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intellego multum te profecisse. Quae scribis, unde veniant, scio; non sunt ficta nec colorata. Dicam tamen quid sentiam: iam de te spem habeo, nondum fiduciam. Tu quoque idem facias volo; non est, quod tibi cito et facile credas. Excute te et varie scrutare et observa; illud ante omnia vide, utrum in  
3 philosophia an in ipsa vita profeceris. Non est philosophia populare artificium nec ostentationi paratum. Non in verbis, sed in rebus est. Nec in hoc adhibetur, ut cum aliqua oblectatione consumatur dies, ut dematur otio nausea. Animum format et fabricat, vitam disponit, actiones regit, agenda et omittenda demonstrat, sedet ad gubernaculum et per ancipitia fluctuantium derigit cursum. Sine hac nemo intrepide potest vivere, nemo secure. Innumerabilia accidunt singulis horis, quae consilium exigant, quod ab hac petendum est.

4 Dicet aliquis: "Quid mihi prodest philosophia, si fatum est? Quid prodest, si deus rector est? Quid prodest, si casus imperat? Nam et mutari certa non possunt et nihil praeparari potest adversus incerta; sed aut consilium meum occupavit deus decrevitque quid facerem, aut consilio meo nihil fortuna permittit."

5 Quicquid est ex his, Lucili, vel si omnia haec sunt, philosophandum est: sive nos inexorabili lege fata

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\* *i. e.*, have merely advanced in years.

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have made great progress. I understand the feelings which prompt your words; they are not feigned or specious words. Nevertheless I shall tell you what I think,—that at present I have hopes for you, but not yet perfect trust. And I wish that you would adopt the same attitude towards yourself; there is no reason why you should put confidence in yourself too quickly and readily. Examine yourself; scrutinize and observe yourself in divers ways; but mark, before all else, whether it is in philosophy or merely in life itself<sup>a</sup> that you have made progress. Philosophy is no trick to catch the public; it is not devised for show. It is a matter, not of words, but of facts. It is not pursued in order that the day may yield some amusement before it is spent, or that our leisure may be relieved of a tedium that irks us. It moulds and constructs the soul; it orders our life, guides our conduct, shows us what we should do and what we should leave undone; it sits at the helm and directs our course as we waver amid uncertainties. Without it, no one can live fearlessly or in peace of mind. Countless things that happen every hour call for advice; and such advice is to be sought in philosophy.

Perhaps someone will say: "How can philosophy help me, if Fate exists? Of what avail is philosophy, if God rules the universe? Of what avail is it, if Chance governs everything? For not only is it impossible to change things that are determined, but it is also impossible to plan beforehand against what is undetermined; either God has forestalled my plans, and decided what I am to do, or else Fortune gives no free play to my plans." Whether the truth, Lucilius, lies in one or in all of these views, we must be philosophers; whether Fate binds us down by an

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constringunt, sive arbiter deus universi cuncta disposuit, sive casus res humanas sine ordine inpellit et iactat, philosophia nos tueri debet. Haec adhortabitur, ut deo libenter pareamus, ut fortunae contumaciter; haec docebit, ut deum sequaris, feras  
6 casum. Sed non est nunc in hanc disputationem transeundum, quid sit iuris nostri, si providentia in imperio est, aut si fatorum series inligatos trahit, aut si repentina ac subita dominantur; illo nunc revertor, ut te moneam et exhorter, ne patiaris inpetum animi tui delabi et refrigescere. Contine illum et constitue, ut habitus animi fiat, quod est inpetus.

7   Iam ab initio, si te bene novi, circumspicies, quid haec epistula munusculi attulerit. Excute illam, et invenies. Non est quod mireris animum meum; adhuc de alieno liberalis sum. Quare autem alienum dixi? Quicquid bene dictum est ab ullo, meum est. Istuc quoque ab Epicuro dictum est: "Si ad naturam vives, numquam eris pauper; si ad opiniones,  
8 numquam eris dives." Exiguum natura desiderat, opinio inensum. Congeratur in te quicquid multi locupletes possederant. Ultra privatum pecuniae modum fortuna te provehat, auro tegat, purpura vestiat, eo deliciarum opumque perducatur, ut terram marmoribus abscondas, non tantum habere tibi liceat, sed calcare divitias. Accedant statuae et picturae

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<sup>a</sup> Frag. 201 Usener.

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inexorable law, or whether God as arbiter of the universe has arranged everything, or whether Chance drives and tosses human affairs without method, philosophy ought to be our defence. She will encourage us to obey God cheerfully, but Fortune defiantly; she will teach us to follow God and endure Chance. But it is not my purpose now to be led into a discussion as to what is within our own control,—if foreknowledge is supreme, or if a chain of fated events drags us along in its clutches, or if the sudden and the unexpected play the tyrant over us; I return now to my warning and my exhortation, that you should not allow the impulse of your spirit to weaken and grow cold. Hold fast to it and establish it firmly, in order that what is now impulse may become a habit of the mind.

If I know you well, you have already been trying to find out, from the very beginning of my letter, what little contribution it brings to you. Sift the letter, and you will find it. You need not wonder at any genius of mine; for as yet I am lavish only with other men's property.—But why did I say "other men"? Whatever is well said by anyone is mine.—This also is a saying of Epicurus<sup>a</sup>: "If you live according to nature, you will never be poor; if you live according to opinion, you will never be rich." Nature's wants are slight; the demands of opinion are boundless. Suppose that the property of many millionaires is heaped up in your possession. Assume that fortune carries you far beyond the limits of a private income, decks you with gold, clothes you in purple, and brings you to such a degree of luxury and wealth that you can bury the earth under your marble floors; that you may not only possess, but tread upon, riches. Add statues, paintings, and

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et quicquid ars ulla luxuriae elaboravit; maiora cupere ab his disces.

- 9 Naturalia desideria finita sunt; ex falsa opinione nascentia ubi desinant, non habent. Nullus enim terminus falso est. Viam eunti aliquid extremum est; error immensus est. Retrahe ergo te a vanis, et cum voles scire, quod petes, utrum naturalem habeat an caecam cupiditatem, considera, num possit alicubi consistere. Si longe progresso semper aliquid longius restat, scito id naturale non esse. VALE.

### XVII.

SENECA LVCILIO SVO SALVTEM

- 1 Proice omnia ista, si sapis, immo ut sapias, et ad bonam mentem magno cursu ac totis viribus tende. Si quid est, quo teneris, aut expedi aut incide. "Moratur," inquis, "me res familiaris; sic illam disponere volo, ut sufficere nihil agenti possit, ne aut  
2 paupertas mihi oneri sit aut ego alicui." Cum hoc dicis, non videris vim ac potentiam eius, de quo cogitas, boni nosse. Et summam quidem rei pervides, quantum philosophia prosit, partes autem nondum satis subtiliter dispicis, necdum scis, quantum ubique nos adiuvet, quemadmodum et in maximis,

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<sup>a</sup> Perhaps from the *Hortensius*; see Müller, *Frag.* 98, p. 326.

# END OF SAMPLE TEXT



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