

## THE EPISTLES OF SENECA

tibi alia parentes tui; sed ego contra omnium tibi eorum contemptum opto, quorum illi copiam. Vota illorum multos compilant, ut te locupletent. Quicquid  
5 ad te transferunt, alicui detrahendum est. Opto tibi tui facultatem, ut vagis cogitationibus agitata mens tandem resistat et certa sit, ut placeat sibi et intellectis veris<sup>1</sup> bonis, quae, simul intellecta sunt, possidentur, aetatis adiectione non egeat. Ille demum necessitates supergressus est et exauctoratus ac liber, qui vivit vita peracta. VALE.

### XXXIII.

SENECA LVCILIO SVO SALVTEM

1 Desideras his quoque epistulis sicut prioribus adscribi aliquas voces nostrorum procerum. Non fuerunt circa flosculos occupati; totus contextus illorum virilis est. Inaequalitatem scias esse, ubi quae eminent, notabilia sunt. Non est admirationi una arbor, ubi in eandem altitudinem tota silva sur-  
2 rexit. Eiusmodi vocibus referta sunt carmina, refertae historiae. Itaque nolo illas Epicuri existimes esse; publicae sunt et maxime nostrae. Sed in<sup>2</sup> illo magis

<sup>1</sup> *veris* Erasmus; *verbis* MSS.

<sup>2</sup> *in* added by Erasmus.

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<sup>a</sup> *i. e.*, Stoic as well as Epicurean.

## EPISTLES XXXII., XXXIII.

Your parents, to be sure, asked other blessings for you ; but I myself pray rather that you may despise all those things which your parents wished for you in abundance. Their prayers plunder many another person, simply that you may be enriched. Whatever they make over to you must be removed from someone else. I pray that you may get such control over yourself that your mind, now shaken by wandering thoughts, may at last come to rest and be steadfast, that it may be content with itself and, having attained an understanding of what things are truly good,—and they are in our possession as soon as we have this knowledge,—that it may have no need of added years. He has at length passed beyond all necessities,—he has won his honourable discharge and is free,—who still lives after his life has been completed. Farewell.

### XXXIII. ON THE FUTILITY OF LEARNING MAXIMS

You wish me to close these letters also, as I closed my former letters, with certain utterances taken from the chiefs of our school. But they did not interest themselves in choice extracts ; the whole texture of their work is full of strength. There is unevenness, you know, when some objects rise conspicuous above others. A single tree is not remarkable if the whole forest rises to the same height. Poetry is crammed with utterances of this sort, and so is history. For this reason I would not have you think that these utterances belong to Epicurus : they are common property and are emphatically our own.<sup>a</sup>

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adnotantur, quia rarae interim interveniunt, quia inexpectatae, quia mirum est fortiter aliquid dici ab homine mollitiam professo. Ita enim plerique iudicant. Apud me Epicurus est et fortis, licet manuleatus sit. Fortitudo et industria et ad bellum prompta mens tam in Persas quam in alte cinctos cadit.

- 3 Non est ergo quod exigas excerpta et repetita; continuum est apud nostros quicquid apud alios excerpitur. Non habemus itaque ista oculiferia nec emptorem decipimus nihil inventurum, cum intraverit, praeter illa, quae in fronte suspensa sunt. Ipsi
- 4 permittimus, unde velint sumere exemplaria. Puta nos velle singulares sententias ex turba separare; cui illas adsignabimus? Zenoni an Cleanthi an Chrysippo an Panaetio an Posidonio? Non sumus sub rege; sibi quisque se vindicat. Apud istos quicquid Hermarchus dixit, quicquid Metrodorus, ad unum refertur. Omnia quae quisquam in illo contubernio locutus est, unius ductu et auspiciis dicta sunt. Non possumus, inquam, licet temptemus, educere aliquid ex tanta rerum aequalium multitudine.

Pauperis est numerare pecus.

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<sup>a</sup> Contrasted with *alte cinctos*. The sleeveless and "girt-up" tunic is the sign of energy; cf. Horace, *Sat.* i. 5. 5, and Suetonius, *Caligula*, 52: the effeminate Caligula would "appear in public with a long-sleeved tunic and bracelets."

<sup>b</sup> Who wore sleeves.

<sup>c</sup> *i. e.*, the Epicureans.

<sup>d</sup> For the phrase *ductu et auspiciis* see Plautus, *Amph.* i. 1. 41 *ut gesserit rem publicam ductu imperio auspicio suo*; and Horace, *Od.* i. 7. 27 *Teucro duce et auspice Teucro*. The original significance of the phrase refers to the right of the commander-in-chief to take the auspices

<sup>e</sup> Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, xiii. 824.

### EPISTLE XXXIII.

They are, however, more noteworthy in Epicurus, because they appear at infrequent intervals and when you do not expect them, and because it is surprising that brave words should be spoken at any time by a man who made a practice of being effeminate. For that is what most persons maintain. In my own opinion, however, Epicurus is really a brave man, even though he did wear long sleeves.<sup>a</sup> Fortitude, energy, and readiness for battle are to be found among the Persians,<sup>b</sup> just as much as among men who have girded themselves up high.

Therefore, you need not call upon me for extracts and quotations; such thoughts as one may extract here and there in the works of other philosophers run through the whole body of our writings. Hence we have no "show-window goods," nor do we deceive the purchaser in such a way that, if he enters our shop, he will find nothing except that which is displayed in the window. We allow the purchasers themselves to get their samples from anywhere they please. Suppose we should desire to sort out each separate motto from the general stock; to whom shall we credit them? To Zeno, Cleanthes, Chrysippus, Panaetius, or Posidonius? We Stoics are not subjects of a despot: each of us lays claim to his own freedom. With them,<sup>c</sup> on the other hand, whatever Hermarchus says, or Metrodorus, is ascribed to one source. In that brotherhood, everything that any man utters is spoken under the leadership and commanding authority<sup>d</sup> of one alone. We cannot, I maintain, no matter how we try, pick out anything from so great a multitude of things equally good.

Only the poor man counts his flock.<sup>e</sup>

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Quocumque miseris oculum, id tibi occurret, quod eminere posset, nisi inter paria legeretur.

- 5 Quare depone istam spem, posse te summatim degustare ingenia maximorum virorum; tota tibi inspicienda sunt, tota tractanda. Res geritur et per lineamenta sua ingenii opus nectitur, ex quo nihil subduci sine ruina potest. Nec recuso, quo minus singula membra, dummodo in ipso homine, consideres. Non est formonsa, cuius crus laudatur aut brachium, sed illa, cuius universa facies admirationem partibus singulis abstulit.
- 6 Si tamen exegeris, non tam mendice tecum agam, sed plena manu fiet; ingens eorum turba est passim iacentium, sumenda erunt, non colligenda. Non enim excidunt, sed fluunt. Perpetua et inter se contexta sunt. Nec dubito, quin multum conferant rudibus adhuc et extrinsecus auscultantibus; facilius enim singula insidunt circumscripta et carminis modo
- 7 inclusa. Ideo pueris et sententias ediscendas damus et has quas Graeci chrias vocant, quia complecti illas puerilis animus potest, qui plus adhuc non capit. Certi profectus viro captare flosculos turpe est et fulcire se notissimis ac paucissimis vocibus et memoria stare; sibi iam innitatur. Dicat ista, non teneat. Turpe est enim seni aut prospicienti senectutem ex

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<sup>a</sup> Either "maxims" or "outlines," "themes." For a discussion of them see *Quintilian, Inst. Orat. i. 9. 3 ff.*

### EPISTLE XXXIII.

Wherever you direct your gaze, you will meet with something that might stand out from the rest, if the context in which you read it were not equally notable.

For this reason, give over hoping that you can skim, by means of epitomes, the wisdom of distinguished men. Look into their wisdom as a whole; study it as a whole. They are working out a plan and weaving together, line upon line, a masterpiece, from which nothing can be taken away without injury to the whole. Examine the separate parts, if you like, provided you examine them as parts of the man himself. She is not a beautiful woman whose ankle or arm is praised, but she whose general appearance makes you forget to admire her single attributes.

If you insist, however, I shall not be niggardly with you, but lavish; for there is a huge multitude of these passages; they are scattered about in profusion,—they do not need to be gathered together, but merely to be picked up. They do not drip forth occasionally; they flow continuously. They are unbroken and are closely connected. Doubtless they would be of much benefit to those who are still novices and worshipping outside the shrine; for single maxims sink in more easily when they are marked off and bounded like a line of verse. That is why we give to children a proverb, or that which the Greeks call *Chria*,<sup>a</sup> to be learned by heart; that sort of thing can be comprehended by the young mind, which cannot as yet hold more. For a man, however, whose progress is definite, to chase after choice extracts and to prop his weakness by the best known and the briefest sayings and to depend upon his memory, is disgraceful; it is time for him to lean on himself. He should make such maxims and not memorize them. For it is disgraceful even for an

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commentario sapere. "Hoc Zenon dixit"; tu quid?  
"Hoc Cleanthes"; tu quid? Quousque sub alio  
moveris? Impera et dic, quod memoriae tradatur.  
8 Aliquid et de tuo profer. Omnes itaque istos, num-  
quam auctores, semper interpretes sub aliena umbra  
latentes, nihil existimo habere generosi, numquam  
ausos aliquando facere, quod diu didicerant. Memo-  
riam in alienis exercuerunt. Aliud autem est memi-  
nisse, aliud scire. Meminisse est rem commissam  
memoriae custodire. At contra scire est et sua facere  
quaeque nec ad exemplar pendere et totiens respicere  
9 ad magistrum. "Hoc dixit Zenon, hoc Cleanthes!"  
Aliquid inter te intersit et librum. Quousque disces?  
Iam et praecipe. "Quid est quare et<sup>1</sup> audiam, quod  
legere possum?" "Multum," inquit, "viva vox facit."  
Non quidem haec, quae alienis verbis commodatur et  
actuari vice fungitur.

10 Adice nunc quod isti, qui numquam tutelae suae  
fiunt, primum in ea re secuntur priores, in qua nemo  
non a priore descivit; deinde in ea re secuntur, quae  
adhuc quaeritur. Numquam autem invenietur si con-

<sup>1</sup> *quid est quare et* Hense; *quid est et quare p*; *quidem quod ar te L*; *quid est quare Pb*.

<sup>a</sup> The objector is the assumed auditor. The answer to the objection gives the general view as to the power of the living voice; to this Seneca assents, provided that the voice has a message of its own.

# END OF SAMPLE TEXT



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