

## THE EPISTLES OF SENECA

- 35 deinde crudelius iudicas aliquid ex vita perdidisse quam ius<sup>1</sup> finiendae? Noli me invitus audire, tamquam ad te iam pertineat ista sententia, et quid dicam aestima: non relinquam senectutem, si me totum mihi reservabit, totum autem ab illa parte meliore; at si coeperit concutere mentem, si partes eius convellere, si mihi non vitam reliquerit, sed animam, prosiliam ex aedificio putri ac ruenti.
- 36 Morbum morte non fugiam, dumtaxat sanabilem nec officientem animo. Non adferam mihi manus propter dolorem; sic mori vinci est. Hunc tamen si sciero perpetuo mihi esse patiendum, exhibo, non propter ipsum, sed quia impedimento mihi futurus est ad omne, propter quod vivitur. Inbecillus est et ignavus, qui propter dolorem moritur, stultus, qui doloris causa vivit.
- 37 Sed in longum exeo. Est praeterea materia, quae ducere diem possit. Et quomodo finem imponere vitae poterit, qui epistulae non potest? Vale ergo. Quod libentius quam mortes meras lecturus es. VALE.

### LIX.

SENECA LVCILIO SVO SALVTEM

- 1 Magnam ex epistula tua percepi voluptatem; mitte enim mihi uti verbis publicis nec illa ad significationem Stoicam revoca. Vitium esse voluptatem credimus. Sit sane; ponere tamen illam solemus ad

<sup>1</sup> *quam ius* Madvig; *quamvis* p; *quamvis* LVPb.

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<sup>a</sup> Since *vale* means "keep well" no less than "good-bye."

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cruel, then, do you suppose it really is to have lost a portion of your life, than to have lost your right to end that life? Do not hear me with reluctance, as if my statement applied directly to you, but weigh what I have to say. It is this: that I shall not abandon old age, if old age preserves me intact for myself, and intact as regards the better part of myself; but if old age begins to shatter my mind, and to pull its various faculties to pieces, if it leaves me, not life, but only the breath of life, I shall rush out of a house that is crumbling and tottering. I shall not avoid illness by seeking death, as long as the illness is curable and does not impede my soul. I shall not lay violent hands upon myself just because I am in pain; for death under such circumstances is defeat. But if I find out that the pain must always be endured, I shall depart, not because of the pain, but because it will be a hindrance to me as regards all my reasons for living. He who dies just because he is in pain is a weakling, a coward; but he who lives merely to brave out this pain, is a fool.

But I am running on too long; and, besides, there is matter here to fill a day. And how can a man end his life, if he cannot end a letter? So farewell. This last word<sup>a</sup> you will read with greater pleasure than all my deadly talk about death. Farewell.

## LIX. ON PLEASURE AND JOY

I received great pleasure from your letter; kindly allow me to use these words in their everyday meaning, without insisting upon their Stoic import. For we Stoics hold that pleasure is a vice. Very likely it is a vice; but we are accustomed to use

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2 demonstrandam animi hilarem adfectionem. Scio, inquam, et voluptatem, si ad nostrum album<sup>1</sup> verba derigimus, rem infamem esse et gaudium nisi sapienti non contingere. Est enim animi elatio suis bonis verisque fidentis. Vulgo tamen sic loquimur, ut dicamus magnum gaudium nos ex illius consulatu aut nuptiis aut ex partu uxoris percepisse, quae adeo non sunt gaudia, ut saepe initia futurae tristitiae sint. Gaudio autem iunctum est non desinere nec in contrarium verti.

3 Itaque cum dicit Vergilius noster

Et mala mentis gaudia,

diserte quidem dicit, sed parum proprie. Nullum enim malum gaudium est. Voluptatibus hoc nomen inposuit et quod voluit expressit. Significavit enim  
4 homines malo suo laetos. Tamen ego non inmerito dixeram cepisse me magnam ex epistula tua voluptatem; quamvis enim ex honesta<sup>2</sup> causa inperitus homo gaudeat, tamen adfectum eius inpotentem et in diversum statim inclinaturum voluptatem voco, opinione falsi boni motam, inmoderatam et inmodicam.

Sed ut ad propositum revertar, audi, quid me in epistula tua delectaverit: habes verba in potestate. Non effert te oratio nec longius quam destinasti  
5 trahit. Multi sunt, qui ad id, quod non proposuerant

<sup>1</sup> *album* R, Agricola; *album* or *alium* MSS.

<sup>2</sup> *honesta* Lipsius; *homine ista* MSS.; *non inhonesta* O. Rossbach.

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<sup>a</sup> A figure taken from the praetor's edict, which was posted publicly on a white tablet, *album*.

<sup>b</sup> *i.e.*, grief.

<sup>c</sup> *Aeneid*, vi. 278.

<sup>d</sup> The wise man, on the other hand, has his emotions under control, and is less likely to be swayed by "an opinion concerning a spurious good."

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the word when we wish to indicate a happy state of mind. I am aware that if we test words by our formula,<sup>a</sup> even pleasure is a thing of ill repute, and joy can be attained only by the wise. For "joy" is an elation of spirit,—of a spirit which trusts in the goodness and truth of its own possessions. The common usage, however, is that we derive great "joy" from a friend's position as consul, or from his marriage, or from the birth of his child; but these events, so far from being matters of joy, are more often the beginnings of sorrow to come. No, it is a characteristic of real joy that it never ceases, and never changes into its opposite.<sup>b</sup>

Accordingly, when our Vergil speaks of

The evil joys of the mind,<sup>c</sup>

his words are eloquent, but not strictly appropriate. For no "joy" can be evil. He has given the name "joy" to pleasures, and has thus expressed his meaning. For he has conveyed the idea that men take delight in their own evil. Nevertheless, I was not wrong in saying that I received great "pleasure" from your letter; for although an ignorant<sup>d</sup> man may derive "joy" if the cause be an honourable one, yet, since his emotion is wayward, and is likely soon to take another direction, I call it "pleasure"; for it is inspired by an opinion concerning a spurious good; it exceeds control and is carried to excess.

But, to return to the subject, let me tell you what delighted me in your letter. You have your words under control. You are not carried away by your language, or borne beyond the limits which you have determined upon. Many writers are tempted by the charm of some alluring phrase to some topic

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scribere, alicuius verbi placentis decore vocentur, quod tibi non evenit; pressa sunt omnia et rei aptata. Loqueris quantum vis et plus significas quam loqueris. Hoc maioris rei indicium est; apparet animum quoque nihil habere supervacui, nihil tumidi.

- 6 Invenio tamen translationes verborum ut non temerarias ita quae periculum sui fecerint. Invenio imagines, quibus si quis nos uti vetat et poetis illas solis iudicat esse concessas, neminem mihi videtur ex antiquis legisse, apud quos nondum captabatur plausibilis oratio. Illi, qui simpliciter et demonstrandae rei causa eloquebantur, parabolis referti sunt, quas existimo necessarias, non ex eadem causa qua poetis, sed ut inbecillitatis nostrae adminicula sint, ut et dicentem et audientem in rem praesentem
- 7 adducant. Sextium ecce cum maxime lego, virum acrem, Graecis verbis, Romanis moribus philosophantem. Movit me imago ab illo posita: ire quadrato agmine exercitum, ubi hostis ab omni parte suspectus est, pugnae paratum; "Idem," inquit, "sapiens facere debet; omnes virtutes suas undique expandat, ut ubicumque infesti aliquid orietur, illic parata praesidia sint et ad nutum regentis sine tumultu respondeant." Quod in exercitibus iis,

<sup>a</sup> *i. e.*, in spite of the fact that your style is compact.

<sup>b</sup> Q. Sextius was a Stoic with Pythagorean leanings, who lived in the days of Julius Caesar. He is also mentioned in *Epp.* lxiv. and lxxiii. A book of moral *Sententiae*, taken over by the Church, is assigned to him, perhaps wrongly.

<sup>c</sup> *Agmen quadratum* was an army in a square formation, with baggage in the middle, ready for battle,—as contrasted with *agmen iustum* (close ranks), and *acies triplex* (a stationary formation, almost rectangular). *Agmen quadratum* is first found in the Spanish campaigns of the second century B. C.

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other than that which they had set themselves to discuss. But this has not been so in your case; all your words are compact, and suited to the subject. You say all that you wish, and you mean still more than you say. This is a proof of the importance of your subject matter, showing that your mind, as well as your words, contains nothing superfluous or bombastic.

I do, however,<sup>a</sup> find some metaphors, not, indeed, daring ones, but the kind which have stood the test of use. I find similes also; of course, if anyone forbids us to use them, maintaining that poets alone have that privilege, he has not, apparently, read any of our ancient prose writers, who had not yet learned to affect a style that should win applause. For those writers, whose eloquence was simple and directed only towards proving their case, are full of comparisons; and I think that these are necessary, not for the same reason which makes them necessary for the poets, but in order that they may serve as props to our feebleness, to bring both speaker and listener face to face with the subject under discussion. For example, I am at this very moment reading Sextius<sup>b</sup>; he is a keen man, and a philosopher who, though he writes in Greek, has the Roman standard of ethics. One of his similes appealed especially to me, that of an army marching in hollow square,<sup>c</sup> in a place where the enemy might be expected to appear from any quarter, ready for battle. "This," said he, "is just what the wise man ought to do; he should have all his fighting qualities deployed on every side, so that wherever the attack threatens, there his supports may be ready to hand and may obey the captain's command without confusion." This is what we notice in armies which serve

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quos imperatores magni ordinant, fieri videmus, ut imperium ducis simul omnes copiae sentiant, sic dispositae, ut signum ab uno datum peditem simul equitemque percurrat; hoc aliquanto magis necessarium esse nobis ait. Illi enim saepe hostem timuere sine causa, tutissimumque illis iter quod suspectissimum fuit; nihil stultitia pacatum habet. Tam superne illi metus est quam infra. Utrumque trepidat latus. Secuntur pericula et occurrunt. Ad omnia pavet, inparata est et ipsis terretur auxiliis. Sapiens autem ad omnem incursum munitus, intentus, non si paupertas, non si luctus, non si ignominia, non si dolor impetum faciat, pedem referet. Interitus et contra illa ibit et inter illa.

9 Nos multa alligant, multa debilitant. Diu in istis vitiis iacuimus, elui difficile est. Non enim inquinati sumus, sed infecti. Ne ab alia imagine ad aliam transeamus, hoc quaeram, quod saepe mecum dispicio: quid ita nos stultitia tam pertinaciter teneat? Primo quia non fortiter illam repellimus nec toto ad salutem impetu nitimur, deinde quia illa, quae a sapientibus viris reperta sunt, non satis credimus nec apertis pectoribus haurimus leviterque tam magnae rei insistimus. Quemadmodum autem potest aliquis, 10 quantum satis sit, adversus vitia discere, qui quantum a vitiis vacat, discit? Nemo nostrum in altum

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<sup>a</sup> *i.e.*, by the troops of the second line, who in training and quality were inferior to the troops of the legion.

<sup>b</sup> *i.e.*, from that of the "fetter" to that of "dust and dye." In § 6 Seneca has praised Lucilius for his judicious employment of metaphors.

# END OF SAMPLE TEXT



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