

## The Materiality of the Voice in Stoic Thought and Seneca’s Personae of Claudius

### I. Diog. Laert. 7.44

Εἶναι δὲ τῆς διαλεκτικῆς ἴδιον τόπον καὶ τὸν προειρημένον περὶ αὐτῆς τῆς φωνῆς, ἐν ᾧ δείκνυται ἡ ἐγγράμματος φωνὴ καὶ τίνα τὰ τοῦ λόγου μέρη, καὶ περὶ σολοικισμοῦ καὶ βαρβαρισμοῦ καὶ ποιημάτων καὶ ἀμφιβολιῶν καὶ περὶ ἐμμελοῦς φωνῆς καὶ περὶ μουσικῆς καὶ περὶ ὄρων κατὰ τινὰς καὶ διαιρέσεων καὶ λέξεων.

A topic belonging to dialectic, and one already mentioned above, is that concerning the voice itself, in which the inscribed voice is clarified, certain parts of speech, topics concerning solecism and barbarism, poems and amphibolies, melodic voice, music, and, according to some, concerning terms, divisions, and diction.

### II. Diog. Laert. 7.55-57

ἔστι δὲ φωνὴ ἀήρ πεπληγμένος ἢ τὸ ἴδιον αἰσθητὸν ἀκοῆς, ὡς φησὶ Διογένης ὁ Βαβυλώνιος ἐν τῇ Περὶ φωνῆς τέχνῃ. ζῶου μὲν ἔστι φωνὴ ἀήρ ὑπὸ ὀρμῆς πεπληγμένος, ἀνθρώπου δ’ ἔστιν ἔναρθρος καὶ ἀπὸ διανοίας ἐκπεμπομένη, ὡς ὁ Διογένης φησὶν, ἥτις ἀπὸ δεκατεσσάρων ἐτῶν τελειοῦται. καὶ σῶμα δ’ ἔστιν ἡ φωνὴ κατὰ τοὺς Στωικούς, ὡς φησὶν Ἀρχέδημος τ’ ἐν τῇ Περὶ φωνῆς καὶ Διογένης καὶ Αντίπατρος καὶ Χρύσιππος ἐν τῇ δευτέρᾳ τῶν Φυσικῶν. [56] πάν γὰρ τὸ ποιοῦν σῶμά ἐστι: ποιεῖ δὲ ἡ φωνὴ προσιούσα τοῖς ἀκούουσιν ἀπὸ τῶν φωνούντων. λέξις δὲ ἔστιν, ὡς φησὶ Διογένης, φωνὴ ἐγγράμματος, οἷον ‘ἡμέρα {ἐστί}.’ λόγος δὲ ἔστι φωνὴ σημαντικὴ ἀπὸ διανοίας ἐκπεμπομένη. [...] Τῆς δὲ λέξεως στοιχεῖα ἔστι τὰ εἰκοσιτέσσαρα γράμματα. τριχῶς δὲ λέγεται τὸ γράμμα, τὸ τε στοιχεῖον ὃ τε χαρακτήρ τοῦ στοιχείου καὶ τὸ ὄνομα, οἷον Ἄλφα: [57] φωνήεντα δὲ ἔστι τῶν στοιχείων ἑπτὰ, α, ε, η, ι, ο, υ, ω: ἄφωνα δὲ ἕξ, β, γ, δ, κ, π, τ. διαφέρει δὲ φωνὴ καὶ λέξις, ὅτι φωνὴ μὲν καὶ ὁ ἦχος ἔστι, λέξις δὲ τὸ ἔναρθρον μόνον. λέξις δὲ λόγου διαφέρει, ὅτι λόγος αἰεὶ σημαντικός ἐστι, λέξις δὲ καὶ ἄσημος, ὡς ἡ βλίτυρι, λόγος δὲ οὐδαμῶς. διαφέρει δὲ καὶ τὸ λέγειν τοῦ προφέρεσθαι: προφέρονται μὲν γὰρ αἱ φωναί, λέγεται δὲ τὰ πράγματα, ἃ δὴ καὶ λεκτὰ τυγχάνει.

Voice is struck air or the proper, perceptible object of hearing, as Diogenes the Babylonian says in his treatise “On the Voice.” The voice of an animal is air struck by an impulse, while the voice of a human is articulate and expressed from reasoning, as Diogenes says, and it develops fully at fourteen years of age. And the voice is a body according to the Stoics, as Archedēmos says in his “On the Voice,” and Diogenes, and Antipater, and Chrysippus in the second book of his “Physics.” For every agent is a body: and the voice acts by going forth to those hearing from those speaking. Speech, as Diogenes [the Babylonian] says, is inscribed voice, as in the expression ‘it’s day.’ Language is signifying voice expressed from reasoning. [...] The twenty-four letters are the elements of speech. But “letter” is said in three ways: the element [of speech], the character of the element, and the noun, such as “Alpha.” Seven of the letters are voiced [i.e., vowels], α, ε, η, ι, ο, υ, ω; and six are voiceless [i.e., consonants], β, γ, δ, κ, π, τ. Voice and speech differ, because an echo is also a voice, but speech alone is articulated. Speech differs from language, because language is always significant, but speech is also senseless, as “the blituri;” but language can in no way be senseless. And producing language differs from uttering: for voices are uttered, but things [τὰ πράγματα], which also happen to be sayable [λεκτὰ], are expressed in language.

### III. Diog. Laert. 7.134

Δοκεῖ δ’ αὐτοῖς ἀρχὰς εἶναι τῶν ὄλων δύο, τὸ ποιοῦν καὶ τὸ πάσχον. τὸ μὲν οὖν πάσχον εἶναι τὴν ἄποιον οὐσίαν τὴν ὕλην, τὸ δὲ ποιοῦν τὸν ἐν αὐτῇ λόγον τὸν θεόν: τοῦτον γὰρ αἰδίον ὄντα διὰ πάσης αὐτῆς δημιουργεῖν ἕκαστα. [...] διαφέρειν δὲ φασὶν ἀρχὰς καὶ στοιχεῖα: τὰς μὲν γὰρ εἶναι ἀγενήτους <καὶ> ἀφθάρτους, τὰ δὲ στοιχεῖα κατὰ τὴν ἐκπύρωσιν φθειρεσθαι. ἀλλὰ καὶ ἀσωμάτους εἶναι τὰς ἀρχὰς καὶ ἀμόρφους, τὰ δὲ μεμορφῶσθαι.

It seems to them that there are two principles of the whole, the active and the passive. While the passive is unqualified substance or matter, the active is the reason in [matter] or God: for this, being eternal, through all matter engineers everything. [...] And they say that principles and elements differ: principles are ungenerated and indestructible, but elements are destroyed in the conflagration; also principles are bodiless (i.e., immaterial) and formless, while the elements are formed.

#### IV. Diog. Laert. 7.156-157

...Δοκεῖ δ' αὐτοῖς τὴν μὲν φύσιν εἶναι πῦρ τεχνικόν, ὁδῶ βαδίζον εἰς γένεσιν, ὅπερ ἐστὶ πνεῦμα πυροειδὲς καὶ τεχνοειδές: τὴν δὲ ψυχὴν αἰσθητικὴν <φύσιν>. ταύτην δ' εἶναι τὸ συμφυὲς ἡμῖν πνεῦμα: διὸ καὶ σῶμα εἶναι καὶ μετὰ τὸν θάνατον ἐπιμένειν: φθαρετὴν δ' ὑπάρχειν, τὴν δὲ τῶν ὅλων ἄφθαρτον, ἧς μέρη εἶναι τὰς ἐν τοῖς ζώοις.

[157] Μέρη δὲ ψυχῆς λέγουσιν ὀκτώ, τὰς πέντ' αἰσθήσεις καὶ τοὺς ἐν ἡμῖν σπερματικούς λόγους καὶ τὸ φωνητικὸν καὶ τὸ λογιστικόν.

...It seems to them that nature is an artful fire, proceeding on a path towards generation, that it is just as much a fiery and artful breath [πνεῦμα]; and the soul is a perceptive nature. This soul is the breath congenial to us: therefore it is also a body and it remains after death. But the soul is still destructible, even though the soul in all things is indestructible, of which the souls in living things are parts.

They say there are eight parts of the soul: the five senses, the spermatic proportions in us, the vocal part, and the reasoning part.

#### V. Diog. Laert. 7.59

Ἄρεται δὲ λόγου εἰσὶ πέντε, Ἑλληνισμός, σαφήνεια, συντομία, πρόπον, κατασκευή. Ἑλληνισμὸς μὲν οὖν ἐστὶ φράσις ἀδιάπτωτος ἐν τῇ τεχνικῇ καὶ μὴ εἰκαίᾳ συνηθείᾳ: σαφήνεια δὲ ἐστὶ λέξις γνωρίμως παριστώσα τὸ νοούμενον: συντομία δὲ ἐστὶ λέξις αὐτὰ τὰ ἀναγκαῖα περιέχουσα πρὸς δήλωσιν τοῦ πράγματος: πρόπον δὲ ἐστὶ λέξις οἰκεία τῷ πράγματι: κατασκευὴ δὲ ἐστὶ λέξις ἐκπεφευγυῖα τὸν ἰδιωτισμὸν. ὁ δὲ βαρβαρισμὸς ἐκ τῶν κακιῶν λέξις ἐστὶ παρὰ τὸ ἔθος τῶν εὐδοκιομένων Ἑλλήνων, σολοικισμὸς δὲ ἐστὶ λόγος ἀκαταλλήλως συντεταγμένος.

The virtues of language are five: Hellenism, clarity, conciseness, fitness, cultivation. Hellenism is phrasing faultless with respect to technical points and not characterized by random usage; clarity is speech comprehensibly stating the thought; conciseness is speech encompassing those points which are the necessities for the presentation of the matter at hand; fitness is speech proper to the matter at hand; cultivation is speech avoiding mere commonness. Among the vices barbarism is speech beyond the usage of respectable Greeks, and solecism is language having been drawn into order incongruously.

#### VI. Seneca, Ep. 40.1

*Quod frequenter mihi scribis gratias ago; nam quo uno modo potes te mihi ostendis. Numquam epistulam tuam accipio ut non protinus una simus. Si imagines nobis amicorum absentium iucundae sunt, quae memoriam renovant et desiderium [absentiae] falso atque inani solacio levant, quanto iucundiores sunt litterae, quae vera amici absentis vestigia, veras notas afferunt? Nam quod in conspectu dulcissimum est, id amici manus epistulae impressa praestat, agnoscere.*

I am grateful that you write to me frequently; for in what one way you are able you present yourself to me. Never do I receive your letter, so that we are not immediately together. If images of our absent friends are pleasing to us, representations which renew the memory and relieve the longing of absence with a false and vain comfort, by how much are letters more pleasing, which, as true vestiges of an absent friend, bring forth true traces? For that which is sweetest in person, that a friend's hand impressed upon a letter provides—recognition.

#### VII. Seneca, Ep. 40.2

*Audisse te scribis Serapionem philosophum, cum istuc applicuisset: 'solet magno cursu verba convellere, quae non effundit +ima+ sed premit et urguet; plura enim veniunt quam quibus vox una sufficiat'. Hoc non probo in philosopho, cuius pronuntiatio quoque, sicut vita, debet esse composita; nihil autem ordinatum est quod praecipitatur et properat. Itaque oratio illa apud Homerum concitata et sine intermissione in morem nivis superveniens oratori data est, lenis et melle dulcior seni profluit.*

You write that you have heard the philosopher Serapio lecture, when he had arrived at your place: “He is accustomed to draw his words violently together into a great coursing [stream], which he does not pour forth but rather presses and urges; for more words come than for which one voice is sufficient.” This I do not approve in a philosopher, whose enunciation, just as his life, ought to be composed. But nothing is ordered which precipitates and hastens. Thus in Homer that speech which is excited and comes over without intermission in the manner of snow is given to the orator; slow speech, sweeter than honey, from an elder flows forth.

### XIII. Seneca, *Ep.* 40.5

*Multum praeterea habet inanitatis et vani, plus sonat quam valet.*

Besides [this style] has much inanity and emptiness, it more makes sounds than it delivers sense.

### IX. Seneca, *Ep.* 40.11

*Quaedam tamen et nationibus puto magis aut minus convenire. In Graecis hanc licentiam tuleris: nos etiam cum scribimus interpungere assuevimus. Cicero quoque noster, a quo Romana eloquentia exsiluit, gradarius fuit. Romanus sermo magis se circumspicit et aestimat praebetque aestimandum.*

Nevertheless certain styles, I think, are more or less agreeable to certain peoples. You can endure this allowance in Greek; but we, when we write, have become accustomed to employ interpuncts. Also, our Cicero, from whom Roman eloquence took its rise, was a pacer. Roman discourse examines itself more and evaluates and offers itself to be evaluated.

### X. Seneca, *Ep.* 114.4-8

[4] *Quomodo Maecenas vixerit notius est quam ut narrari nunc debeat quomodo ambulaverit, quam delicatus fuerit, quam cupierit videri, quam vitia sua latere noluerit. Quid ergo? non oratio eius aequae soluta est quam ipse discinctus? non tam insignita illius verba sunt quam cultus, quam comitatus, quam domus, quam uxor? Magni vir ingenii fuerat si illud egisset via rectiore, si non vitasset intellegi, si non etiam in oratione difflieret. Videbis itaque eloquentiam ebrii hominis involutam et errantem et licentiae plenam. [5] Quid turpius ‘amne silvisque ripa comantibus’? Vide ut ‘alveum lyntribus arent versoque vado remittant hortos’. Quid? si quis ‘feminae cinno crispat et labris columbatur incipitque suspirans, ut cervice lassa fanantur nemoris tyranni’. Inremediabilis factio rimantur epulis lagonaque temptant domos et spe mortem exigunt.’ ‘Genium festo vix suo testem.’ ‘Tenuisve cerei fila et crepacem molam.’ ‘Focum mater aut uxor investiunt.’ [6] *Non statim cum haec legeris hoc tibi occurret, hunc esse qui solutis tunicis in urbe semper incesserit? [...] [7] Haec verba tam inprobe structa, tam neglegenter abiecta, tam contra consuetudinem omnium posita ostendunt mores quoque non minus novos et pravos et singulares fuisse. [...] Hanc ipsam laudem suam corrumpit istis orationis portentosissimae delicis; [8] apparet enim mollem fuisse, non mitem. Hoc istae ambages compositionis, hoc verba transversa, hoc sensus miri, magni quidem saepe sed enervati dum exeunt, cuivis manifestum facient: motum illi felicitate nimia caput.**

[4] How Maecenas lived is so well-known that it need not be narrated now. How he walked, how luxurious he was, and how he desired to be seen; also, how he did not want that his vices should be hidden. What, then? Is his speech not just as loose as his garments? Are the words of that man not as accented [*insignita*] as his style, his entourage, his home, his wife? He would have been a man of great talent, if he had proceeded by the correct way, if he had not shunned that he might be understood, if he were not also flowing away in his speech. You will see how the eloquence of a drunken man is obscure and wandering and full of license. [5] What’s more foul than “a stream and a bank with shaggy woods”? Do you see how “they plow the river-bed with skiffs and where the shallows were overturned they leave gardens”? Or if someone “shakes his feminine locks, pouts his lips, and starts sighing, as lords of the grove bow in homage their languid necks.” “An irreparable faction they make raids on feasts and make trials with vessels on homes and by anticipation they exact death.” “A genius could scarcely bear witness to his own feast.” “Threads of slender wax and crackling meal.” “Mother or wife dress up the hearth.” [6] Does it not immediately occur to you upon reading these words that this man is the one who always strolled around the city with his tunic loose? [7] These words so shamelessly strewn, so carelessly cast, so placed against the custom of all show that his *mores* also were no less novel and depraved and singular. [...] The praise itself [of which he was worthy] he frustrated with those delicacies of his monstrous speech; [8] for it seems that it was soft, not ripe. This point his roundabout composition, his inverted word-order, his sense of wonder, often of something great but dissipated once they go out, all of these things make plain to anyone.

### XI. Seneca, *Polyb.* 14.1-2

*Hic itaque princeps, qui publicum omnium hominum solacium est, aut me omnia fallunt aut iam recreavit animum tuum et tam magno vulnere maiora adhibuit remedia. Iam te omni confirmavit modo, iam omnia exempla, quibus ad animi aequitatem compellereris, tenacissima memoria rettulit, iam omnium praecepta sapientum adsueta sibi facundia explicuit. Nullus itaque melius has adloquendi partes occupaverit: aliud*

*habebunt hoc dicente pondus verba velut ab oraculo missa; omnem vim doloris tui divina eius contundet auctoritas. Hunc itaque tibi puta dicere...*

And so this *princeps*, who is the public consolation of all humanity, either all things deceive me or he already restored your soul and applied great remedies to your wound so great. Already he has confirmed you in every way, already all the examples, by which you would have been driven to balance in your soul, his most retentive memory has brought back, already the precepts of all the sages his customary eloquence has explicated. And so no one better could have taken up these parts of addressing you: with this man speaking these words will have will hold a certain weight, just as if the were sent by an oracle; all the strength of your pain his divine authority will subdue. Imagine this man speaks to you in this way...

## **XII. Seneca, Apoc. IV.2-3**

*Haec Apollo. At Lachesis, quae et ipsa homini formosissimo faveret, fecit illud plena manu, et Neroni multos annos de suo donat. Claudium autem iubent omnes ‘χαίροντας, εὐφημοῦντας ἐκπέμπειν δόμων.’ Et ille quidem animam ebullit, et ex eo desiit vivere videri. Exspiravit autem dum comoedos audit, ut scias me non sine causa illos timere. Ultima vox eius haec inter homines audita est, cum maiorem sonitum emisisset illa parte, qua facilius loquebatur: “vae me, puto, concacavi me.” Quod an fecerit, nescio: omnia certe concacavit.*

Apollo said these things. But Lachesis, who also herself favored this most beautiful man, made him with a hand full of thread, and to Nero she gave many years from her supply. But as for Claudius, they ordered that everyone “rejoicing, sending up blessings, send him out from the house.” And indeed he burped up his soul, and from that point he ceased to seem to live. But he expired while he was listening to comic actors, so you know that I distrust them not without cause. His last words [*ultima vox*] were heard among these men, although he emitted most of them from that part with which he often spoke more easily: “Oh my, I think, I’ve shit myself.” Whether he did I don’t know; he certainly shat all over everything else.

## **XIII. Seneca, Apoc. V.2**

*...respondisse nescio quid perturbato sono et voce confusa; non intellegere se linguam eius; nec Graecum esse nec Romanum nec ullius gentis notae.*

...responded with a sound somehow unsettled and a confused voice; that he did not understand his language, which was neither Greek nor Roman nor that of any other known people.

## **XIV. Seneca, Apoc. V.3**

*...vocem nullius terrestris animalis sed qualis esse marinis belvis solet, raucam et implicitam...*

...voice of no land animal, but similar to the beasts of the sea, harsh and inarticulate...

## **XV. Seneca, Apoc. VI.2**

*excandescit hoc loco Claudius et quanto potest murmure irascitur. quid diceret nemo intellegebat.*

At this point Claudius grew burning hot, and with as much a murmur as he was able to produce he showed his anger. No one was able to understand what he was saying.

## **XVI. Seneca, Apoc. VII.4-5**

*Itaque quantum intellegi potuit, haec visus est dicere: “Ego te, fortissime deorum Hercule, speravi mihi adfuturum apud alios, et si qui a me notorem petisset, te fui nominaturus, qui me optime nosti. Nam si memoria repetis, ego eram qui tibi ante templum tuum ius dicebam totis diebus mense Iulio et Augusto. Tu scis, quantum illic miseriarum contulerim, cum causidicos audirem diem et noctem, in quod si incidisses, valde fortis licet tibi videaris, maluisses cloacas Aegaeae purgare: multo plus ego stercoris exhausti. Sed quoniam volo...”*

And so as far as he was able to be understood, he seemed to say these words: “I hoped that you, bravest of the gods, Hercules, would be with me before the rest, and if someone had requested a sponsor from me, I thought that I would name you, since you know me best of all. For if you search your memory, I was the one who was offering judgments before your temple for entire days in the months of July and August. You know how many complaints I endured in that place, when I was listening to the advocates day and night. If you had fallen into that labor, even allowing that

you seem very strong, you would have preferred to cleanse the sewers of Augeas: so much more bullshit did I drain. But because I want...”

### **XVII. Seneca, *Polyb.* 15.2**

*Innumerabilia undique exempla separatorum morte fratrum succurrunt, immo contra vix ulla umquam horum paria conspecta sunt una senescentia; sed contentus nostrae domus exemplis ero. Nemo enim tam expers erit sensus ac sanitatis, ut Fortunam ulli queratur luctum intulisse, quam sciet etiam Caesarum lacrimas concupisse.*

From all sides innumerable examples of brothers separated by death rush upon me, indeed hardly any pair of these ever have appeared to grow old together; but I will be content with examples from my own house. For no one will be so lacking in sense and sanity, that he would complain about the mourning Fortune has brought to him, when he knows that she has desired even the tears of Ceasars.

### **XVIII. Seneca, *Apoc.* X.3**

*Sed quid ego de tot ac talibus viris dicam? Non vacat deflere publicas clades intuenti domestica mala. Itaque illa omittam, haec referam...*

But what shall I say about so many and such men? There is no time to weep over public destructions for the man observing his own domestic evils. And so I will omit the former, and I will recall the latter instead...

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