

The Externality of Seneca's Vitia: The Progress of Disease and the Possibility of a Cure

1. Ep. 53.7-8

It happens otherwise in these diseases with which souls are affected: inasmuch as one is worse, the less he feels it. You should not marvel, my dear Lucilius, for whoever sleeps lightly, even has a sort of quiet and sometimes, sleeping, thinks he is sleeping: heavy slumber snuffs out even dreams and sinks the soul deeper than as is in his own understanding. [8] Why does no one confess his faults? Because even now he is in them: A waking man recalls a dream, and admitting his vices is an indication of health.

Contra evenit in his morbis quibus afficiuntur animi: quo quis peius se habet, minus sentit. Non est quod mireris, Lucili carissime; nam qui leviter dormit, et species secundum quietem capit et aliquando dormire se dormiens cogitat: gravis sopor etiam somnia exstinguit animumque altius mergit quam ut in ullo intellectu sui sit. [8] Quare vitia sua nemo confitetur? quia etiam nunc in illis est: somnium narrare vigilantis est, et vitia sua confiteri sanitatis indicium est.

2. Ep. 53.9

Were you sick, you would go into remission, you would dismiss the care of personal business and would cut out legal matters nor would you think anyone of such importance for whom you would advocate; with the whole mind you would see to it that you would be free from disease at once.

Si aeger esses, curam intermisisses rei familiaris et forensia tibi negotia excidissent nec quemquam tanti putares cui advocatus in remissione descenderes; toto animo id ageres ut quam primum morbo liberareris.

3. Ep. 8.2

...I leave in writing healthful reminders, or as prescriptions of useful drugs, which I have found to be effective for my own ulcers, which have ceased to spread, even if they are not healed.

...salutares admonitiones, velut medicamentorum utilium compositiones, litteris mando, esse illas efficaces in meis ulceribus expertus, quae etiam si persanata non sunt, serpere desierunt.

4. Ep. 56.10

For all the vices are easier in the open; Then too the diseases tend toward health when they burst forth from hiding and bring to bear their strength. And so you should know that avarice and ambition and other ills of the human soul are most destructive when they sink down into a pretense of health.

Omnia enim vitia in aperto leniora sunt; morbi quoque tunc ad sanitatem inclinant cum ex abdito erumpunt ac vim sui proferunt. Et avaritiam itaque et ambitionem et cetera mala mentis humanae tunc perniciosissima scias esse cum simulata sanitate subsidunt.

5. The relationship between metaphor and philosophical content –  
per Brad Inwood

- (1) purely ornamental (and evidently so), with no reason to impute doctrinal significance to it
- (2) an essential component of the philosopher's conception, which has developed his philosophical understanding
- (3) to enliven or reinforce the impact of a theory without being meant to determine the content thereof, and which may or may not introduce misleading elements or ideas
- (4) self-conscious analogies drawn to familiar experiences,...whose implications are meant to help determine the sense of a doctrine, either essential to the justification thereof, or purely illustrative

6. Ep. 59.5-6

...all your words are brief and to the point; you say how much you wish, and signify more than you say... they, who spoke simply and for the sake of proving the matter, resorted to *figures of speech*, which I think are necessary, not as the same reason for poets, but that they may be crutches for our weakness, that they may lead the speaker and the hearer to the matter in question.

...pressa sunt omnia et rei aptata; loqueris quantum vis et plus significas quam loqueris... illi, qui simpliciter et demonstrandae rei causa eloquebantur, parabolis referti sunt, quas existimo necessarias, non ex eadem causa qua poetis, sed ut imbecillitas nostrae adminicula sint, ut et dicentem et audientem in rem praesentem adducant.

7. *De Otio* 3.1

I will demonstrate as well that this is agreeable to the Stoics, not because I have forsworn myself to do nothing contrary to Zeno and Chrysippus, but because the matter itself allows me to follow their opinion, since if someone always follows another, he is part of a faction, not the senate. Oh that all things were held, and truth were open and public, and we would change nothing of dogmas! Now we seek truth alongside them who teach us.

Hoc Stoicis quoque placere ostendam, non quia mihi legem dixerim nihil contra dictum Zenonis Chrysippii committere, sed quia res ipsa patitur me ire in illorum sententiam, quoniam si quis semper unius sequitur, non in curia sed in factione est. Vtinam quidem iam tenerentur omnia et in aperto et confesso veritas esset nihilque ex decretis mutarem! nunc veritatem cum eis ipsis qui docent quaerimus.

8. *De Ira* 1.8.2-3

I say that in the first place the enemy should be warded off at the borders; for when he has entered and born himself to the gates, he does not accept an offer from the captives. Nor is the mind set apart, watching the passions from without, that it does not suffer them to advance further than they ought, but is itself changed unto passion and therefore cannot recall that useful and healthful strength, now betrayed and weakened. For, as I said, they do not have their own separate seats, and apart, but passion and reason are, for better and worse, a change of the soul. How therefore shall reason, occupied and weighed down by the vices, rise again, which has yielded to anger? Or by what means will it free itself from the confusion in which a mixture of worse things has prevailed?

In primis, inquam, finibus hostis arcendus est; nam cum intrauit et portis se intulit, modum a captiuis non accipit. Neque enim sepositus est animus et extrinsecus speculatur adfectus, ut illos non patiatul ultra quam oportet procedere, sed in adfectum ipse mutatur ideoque non potest utilem illam uim et salutarem proditam iam infirmatamque reuocare.

Non enim, ut dixi, separatas ista sedes suas diductasque habent, sed adfectus et ratio in melius peiusque mutatio animi est. Quomodo ergo ratio occupata et oppressa uitii resurget, quae irae cessit? aut quemadmodum ex confusione se liberabit in qua peiorum mixtura praeualuit?

9. Ep. 90.6

But afterward kingdoms were turned to tyranny, when vices crept in, and there was a need for laws, which things indeed wise men instituted.

Sed postquam subrepentibus vitiis in tyrannidem regna conversa sunt, opus esse legibus coepit, quas et ipsas inter initia tulere sapientes.

10. Ep. 41.8

Praise in him what cannot be taken away or given, what is the peculiar property of man. You ask what that is? The soul and fully-formed reason in the soul. For man is a rational animal; and thus its purpose is accomplished, if it fills in whom it is born.

Lauda in illo quod nec eripi potest nec dari, quod proprium hominis est. Quaeris quid sit? animus et ratio in animo perfecta. Rationale enim animal est homo; consummatur itaque bonum eius, si id implevit cui nascitur.

11. Ep. 66.32

Reason alone is unchanging and steadfast of judgment; it does not serve but commands the senses.

Sola ratio immutabilis et iudicii tenax est; non enim servit sed imperat sensibus.

12. Ep. 50.4

Why do we deceive ourselves? Our ill is not outside us: it is within, in the organs themselves it resides, and for that reason we arrive at health with difficulty because we do not know we are sick.

Quid nos decipimus? non est extrinsecus malum nostrum: intra nos est, in visceribus ipsis sedet, et ideo difficulter ad sanitatem pervenimus quia nos aegrotare nescimus.

13. Ep. 50.6

...how much more easily the soul receives shape, more flexible and obedient than every humor. For what else is the soul than after a certain fashion a breath possessing itself? Yet you know that a breath is all the more facile insofar as it is softer than every other material.

...quanto facilius animus accipit formam, flexibilis et omni umore obsequentior! Quid enim est aliud animus quam quodam modo se habens spiritus? vides autem tanto spiritum esse faciliorem omni alia materia quanto tenuior est.

14. Ep. 112.4

'But he says that his vices offend him.' I have not denied it; who is not offended? Men at the same time love and hate their vices. And so then we will render judgment when he has pledged a surety that luxury is hateful to him: for now they disagree with each other.

Farewell

'Sed dicit se offendi vita sua.' Non negaverim; quis enim non offenditur?

Homines vitia sua et amant simul et oderunt. Tunc itaque de illo feremus sententiam cum

fidem nobis fecerit invisam iam sibi esse luxuriam: nunc illis  
male convenit. Vale.

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