

THE EPISTLES OF SENECA

ignoscere, quod quae fecere patiuntur. Nec inmerito hic illos furor vexat; necesse est enim in inensum exeat cupiditas, quae naturalem modum transilit. Ille enim habet suum finem, inania et ex libidine orta sine termino sunt. 6
Necessaria metitur utilitas; supervacua quo redigis? Voluptatibus itaque se mergunt, quibus in consuetudinem adductis carere non possunt, et ob hoc miserrimi sunt, quod eo pervenerunt, ut illis quae supervacua fuerant, facta sint necessaria. Serviunt itaque voluptatibus, non fruuntur, et mala sua, quod malorum ultimum est, et¹ amant. Tunc autem est consummata infelicitas, ubi turpia non solum delectant, sed etiam placent, et desinit esse remedio locus, ubi quae fuerant vitia, mores sunt. VALE.

XL

SENECA LVCILIO SVO SALVTEM

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 desiderium² falso atque inani solacio levant, quanto iucundiores sunt litterae, quae vera amici absentis vestigia, veras notas

¹ *et LPb*; omitted by p.

² *absentiae*, after *desiderium*, is bracketed by Hense, following Gemoll.

^a *i.e.*, their pleasures. These ills, by being cultivated, become vices.

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the fact that they suffer the evils which they have inflicted upon others. And they are rightly harassed by this madness, because desire must have unbounded space for its excursions, if it transgresses nature's mean. For this has its bounds, but waywardness and the acts that spring from wilful lust are without boundaries. Utility measures our needs; but by what standard can you check the superfluous? It is for this reason that men sink themselves in pleasures, and they cannot do without them when once they have become accustomed to them, and for this reason they are most wretched, because they have reached such a pass that what was once superfluous to them has become indispensable. And so they are the slaves of their pleasures instead of enjoying them; they even love their own ills,^a—and that is the worst ill of all! Then it is that the height of unhappiness is reached, when men are not only attracted, but even pleased, by shameful things, and when there is no longer any room for a cure, now that those things which once were vices have become habits. Farewell.

XL. ON THE PROPER STYLE FOR A PHILOSOPHER'S DISCOURSE

I thank you for writing to me so often; for you are revealing your real self to me in the only way you can. I never receive a letter from you without being in your company forthwith. If the pictures of our absent friends are pleasing to us, though they only refresh the memory and lighten our longing by a solace that is unreal and unsubstantial, how much more pleasant is a letter, which brings us real traces,

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adferunt? Nam quod in conspectu dulcissimum est, id amici manus epistulae inpressa praestat, agnoscere.

2 Audisse te scribis Serapionem philosophum, cum istuc adplicuisset: "Solet magno cursu verba convellere, quae non effundit una, 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 iuveniori¹ oratori data est, lenis et melle dulcior seni profluit.

3 Sic itaque habe, istam² vim dicendi rapidam atque abundantem aptiorem esse circulanti quam agenti rem magnam ac seriam docentique. Aequè stillare illum nolo quam currere; nec extendat aures nec obruat. Nam illa quoque inopia et exilitas minus intentum auditorem habet taedio interruptae tarditatis, facilius tamen insidit, quod exspectatur, quam quod praetervolat. Denique tradere homines discipulis praecepta dicuntur; non traditur quod fugit.

4 Adice nunc, quod quae veritati operam dat oratio, inconposita esse debet et simplex. Haec popularis

¹ *iuveniori* Hense; *iuveni* Haupt; omitted in MSS.

² *habe istam* later MSS.; *habe ut istam* pLPb.

^a This person cannot be identified.

^b The explanation of Professor Summers seems sound, that the metaphor is taken from a mountain-torrent. Compare the description of Cratinus' style in Aristophanes, *Ach.* 526, or that of Pindar in Horace, *Od.* iv. 2. 5 ff.

^c *Iliad*, iii. 222 (Odysseus), and i. 249 (Nestor).

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real evidences, of an absent friend ! For that which is sweetest when we meet face to face is afforded by the impress of a friend's hand upon his letter, —recognition.

You write me that you heard a lecture by the philosopher Serapio,^a when he landed at your present place of residence. "He is wont," you say, "to wrench up his words with a mighty rush, and he does not let them flow forth one by one, but makes them crowd and dash upon each other.^b For the words come in such quantity that a single voice is inadequate to utter them." I do not approve of this in a philosopher ; his speech, like his life, should be composed ; and nothing that rushes headlong and is hurried is well ordered. That is why, in Homer, the rapid style, which sweeps down without a break like a snow-squall, is assigned to the younger speaker ; from the old man eloquence flows gently, sweeter than honey.^c

Therefore, mark my words ; that forceful manner of speech, rapid and copious, is more suited to a mountebank than to a man who is discussing and teaching an important and serious subject. But I object just as strongly that he should drip out his words as that he should go at top speed ; he should neither keep the ear on the stretch, nor deafen it. For that poverty-stricken and thin-spun style also makes the audience less attentive because they are weary of its stammering slowness ; nevertheless, the word which has been long awaited sinks in more easily than the word which flits past us on the wing. Finally, people speak of "handing down" precepts to their pupils ; but one is not "handing down" that which eludes the grasp. Besides, speech that deals with the truth should be unadorned and plain. *This*

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nihil habet veri; movere vult turbam et inconsultas aures inpetu rapere, tractandam se non praebet, aufertur. Quomodo autem regere potest, quae regi non potest? Quid, quod haec oratio, quae sanandis mentibus adhibetur, descendere in nos debet? Remedia non prosunt, nisi inmorantur.

- 5 Multum praeterea habet inanitatis et vani, plus sonat quam valet. Lenienda sunt, quae me exterrant, conpescenda, quae irritant, discutienda, quae fallunt, inhibenda luxuria, corripienda avaritia; quid horum raptim potest fieri? Quis medicus aegros in transitu curat? Quid, quod ne voluptatem quidem ullam habet talis verborum sine dilectu ruentium strepitus?
- 6 Sed ut pleraque, quae fieri posse non crederes, cognovisse satis est, ita istos, qui verba exercuerunt, abunde est semel audisse. Quid enim quis discere, quid imitari velit? Quid de eorum animo iudicet, quorum oratio perturbata et inmissa est nec potest reprimi?
- 7 Quemadmodum per proclive currentium non ubi visum est, gradus sistitur, sed incitato corporis pondere se rapit¹ ac longius quam voluit effertur; sic ista dicendi celeritas nec in sua potestate est nec satis decora philosophiae, quae ponere debet verba, non proicere, et pedetemptim procedere.

¹ *se rapit* later MSS. ; *serpit* LPb ; *serpitur* p.

^a Seneca's phrase, *quae fieri posse non crederes*, has been interpreted as a definition of *παράδοξα*. It is more probable, however, that he is comparing with the juggler's tricks the verbal performances of certain lecturers, whose jargon one marvels at but does not care to hear again.

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popular style has nothing to do with the truth ; its aim is to impress the common herd, to ravish heedless ears by its speed ; it does not offer itself for discussion, but snatches itself away from discussion. But how can that speech govern others which cannot itself be governed ? May I not also remark that all speech which is employed for the purpose of healing our minds, ought to sink into us ? Remedies do not avail unless they remain in the system.

Besides, this sort of speech contains a great deal of sheer emptiness ; it has more sound than power. My terrors should be quieted, my irritations soothed, my illusions shaken off, my indulgences checked, my greed rebuked. And which of these cures can be brought about in a hurry ? What physician can heal his patient on a flying visit ? May I add that such a jargon of confused and ill-chosen words cannot afford pleasure, either ? No ; but just as you are well satisfied, in the majority of cases, to have seen through tricks which you did not think could possibly be done,^a so in the case of these word-gymnasts,—to have heard them once is amply sufficient. For what can a man desire to learn or to imitate in them ? What is he to think of their souls, when their speech is sent into the charge in utter disorder, and cannot be kept in hand ? Just as, when you run down hill, you cannot stop at the point where you had decided to stop, but your steps are carried along by the momentum of your body and are borne beyond the place where you wished to halt ; so this speed of speech has no control over itself, nor is it seemly for philosophy ; since philosophy should carefully place her words, not fling them out, and should proceed step by step.

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8 “Quid ergo? Non aliquando et insurget?” Quidni? Sed salva dignitate morum, quam violenta ista et nimia vis exuit. Habeat vires magnas, moderatas tamen; perennis sit unda, non torrens. Vix oratori permiserim talem dicendi velocitatem inrevocabilem ac sine lege vadentem. Quemadmodum enim iudex subsequi poterit aliquando etiam inperitus et rudis? Tum quoque, cum illum aut ostentatio abstulerit aut affectus inpotens sui,¹ tantum festinet atque ingerat, quantum aures pati possunt.

9 Recte ergo facies, si non videris istos, qui quantum dicant, non quemadmodum quaerunt, et ipse malueris, si necesse est, ut P. Vinicius² dicere, qui titubat.³ Cum quaereretur, quomodo P. Vinicius diceret, Asellius ait: “Tractim.” Nam Geminus Varius ait: “Quomodo istum disertum dicatis nescio; tria verba non potest iungere.” Quidni malis tu sic dicere,
10 quomodo Vinicius? Aliquis tam insulsus intervenerit quam qui illi singula verba vellenti, tamquam dictaret, non diceret, ait: “Dic, numquid⁴ dicas.” Nam Q. Hateri⁵ cursum, suis temporibus oratoris celeberrimi, longe abesse ab homine sano volo; numquam dubitavit, numquam intermisit; semel incipiebat, semel desinebat.

¹ *affectus inpotens sui* Muretus; *effectus impetus sui* MSS.

² *ut P. Vinicius* Madvig; *vel p. vinicium* MSS.; *velut P. Vinicius* Lipsius.

³ *qui titubat* Capps; *qui itaque* MSS.

⁴ *numquid* Buecheler; *numquam* MSS.

⁵ *nam Q. Hateri* Lipsius; *namque hateri* pP; *namq. aetheri* L; *namque hereri* b.

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