

## THE EPISTLES OF SENECA

non unde veniant, sed quo eant. Si quid est, quod vitam beatam potest facere, id bonum est suo iure. 7 Depravari enim in malum non potest. Quid est ergo, in quo erratur, cum omnes beatam vitam optent? Quod instrumenta eius pro ipsa habent et illam, dum petunt, fugiunt. Nam cum summa vitae beatæ sit solida securitas et eius inconcussa fiducia, sollicitudinis colligunt causas et per insidiosum iter vitae non tantum ferunt sarcinas, sed trahunt; ita longius ab effectu eius, quod petunt, semper abscedunt et quo plus operæ inpendunt, hoc se magis impediunt et feruntur retro. Quod evenit in labyrintho prope- rantibus; ipsa illos velocitas implicat. VALE.

### XLV.

#### SENECA LVCILIO SVO SALVTEM

- 1 Librorum istic inopiam esse quereris. Non refert, quam multos, sed quam bonos habeas; lectio certa prodest, varia delectat. Qui, quo destinavit, pervenire vult, unam sequatur viam, non per multas vagetur. Non ire istuc, sed errare est.
- 2 "Vellem,"<sup>1</sup> inquis, "magis consilium mihi quam libros dares." Ego vero quoscumque habeo, mittere paratus sum et totum horreum excutere. Me quoque

<sup>1</sup> As Hense suggests, we should from the context expect *nollem* rather than *vellem*.

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things come, but to the goal towards which they tend. If there is anything that can make life happy, it is good on its own merits ; for it cannot degenerate into evil. Where, then, lies the mistake, since all men crave the happy life ? It is that they regard the means for producing happiness as happiness itself, and, while seeking happiness, they are really fleeing from it. For although the sum and substance of the happy life is unalloyed freedom from care, and though the secret of such freedom is unshaken confidence, yet men gather together that which causes worry, and, while travelling life's treacherous road, not only have burdens to bear, but even draw burdens to themselves ; hence they recede farther and farther from the achievement of that which they seek, and the more effort they expend, the more they hinder themselves and are set back. This is what happens when you hurry through a maze ; the faster you go, the worse you are entangled. Farewell.

### XLV. ON SOPHISTICAL ARGUMENTATION

You complain that in your part of the world there is a scant supply of books. But it is quality, rather than quantity, that matters ; a limited list of reading benefits ; a varied assortment serves only for delight. He who would arrive at the appointed end must follow a single road and not wander through many ways. What you suggest is not travelling ; it is mere tramping.

“ But,” you say, “ I should rather have you give me advice than books.” Still, I am ready to send you all the books I have, to ransack the whole storehouse. If it were possible, I should join you there

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isto, si possem, transferrem, et nisi mature te finem officii sperarem inpetraturum, hanc senilem expeditionem indixissem mihi nec me Charybdis et Scylla et fabulosum istud fretum deterrere potuissent. Tranassem ista, non solum traiecissem, dummodo te complecti possem et praesens aestimare, quantum animo crevissem.

3 Ceterum quod libros meos tibi mitti desideras, non magis ideo me disertum puto quam formosum putarem, si imaginem meam peteres. Indulgentiae scio istud esse, non iudicii. Et si modo iudicii est, indulgentia  
4 tibi inposuit. Sed qualescumque sunt, tu illos sic lege, tamquam verum quaeram adhuc, non sciam, et contumaciter quaeram. Non enim me cuiquam emancipavi, nullius nomen fero. Multum magnorum virorum iudicio credo, aliquid et meo vindico. Nam  
5 vacua quaesissent. Multum illis temporis verborum cavillatio eripuit, captiosae disputationes, quae acumen irritum exercent. Nectimus nodos et ambiguam significationem verbis inligamus ac deinde dissolvimus.

Tantum nobis vacat? Iam vivere, iam mori scimus? Tota illo mente pergendum est, ubi pro  
6 videri debet, ne res nos, non verba, decipiant. Quid

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myself; and were it not for the hope that you will soon complete your term of office, I should have imposed upon myself this old man's journey; no Scylla or Charybdis or their storied straits could have frightened me away. I should not only have crossed over, but should have been willing to swim over those waters, provided that I could greet you and judge in your presence how much you had grown in spirit.

Your desire, however, that I should dispatch to you my own writings does not make me think myself learned, any more than a request for my picture would flatter my beauty. I know that it is due to your charity rather than to your judgment. And even if it is the result of judgment, it was charity that forced the judgment upon you. But whatever the quality of my works may be, read them as if I were still seeking, and were not aware of, the truth, and were seeking it obstinately, too. For I have sold myself to no man; I bear the name of no master. I give much credit to the judgment of great men; but I claim something also for my own. For these men, too, have left to us, not positive discoveries, but problems whose solution is still to be sought. They might perhaps have discovered the essentials, had they not sought the superfluous also. They lost much time in quibbling about words and in sophistical argumentation; all that sort of thing exercises the wit to no purpose. We tie knots and bind up words in double meanings, and then try to untie them.

Have we leisure enough for this? Do we already know how to live, or die? We should rather proceed with our whole souls towards the point where it is our duty to take heed lest things, as well as words, deceive us. Why, pray, do you discriminate between

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- mihi vocum similitudines distinguis, quibus nemo unquam nisi dum disputat captus est? Res fallunt; illas discerne. Pro bonis mala amplectimur; optamus contra id, quod optavimus. Pugnant vota nostra cum  
7 votis, consilia cum consiliis. Adulatio quam similis est amicitiae! Non imitatur tantum illam, sed vincit et praeterit; apertis ac propitiis auribus recipitur et in praecordia ima descendit, eo ipso gratiosa, quo laedit. Doce quemadmodum hanc similitudinem possim dinoscere. Venit ad me pro amico blandus inimicus. Vitia nobis sub virtutum nomine obrepunt, temeritas sub titulo fortitudinis latet, moderatio vocatur ignavia, pro cauto timidus accipitur; in his magno periculo erramus. His certas notas inprime.
- 8 Ceterum qui interrogatur, an cornua habeat, non est tam stultus, ut frontem suam temptet, nec rursus tam ineptus aut hebes, ut ne sciat tu illi subtilissima collectione persuaseris.<sup>1</sup> Sic ista sine noxa decipiunt, quomodo praestigiatorum acetabula et calculi, in quibus me fallacia ipsa delectat. Effice, ut quomodo fiat intellegam; perdidit usum. Idem de istis captionibus dico; quo enim nomine potius sophismata  
9 appellem? Nec ignoranti nocent nec scientem iuvant. Si utique vis verborum ambiguitates diducere, hoc nos doce, beatum non eum esse, quem vulgus

<sup>1</sup> Buecheler supposes a lacuna in this sentence, which he would fill: *ut nesciat aliter esse ac tu illi etc.*, "so that he does not know the facts to be far different from what you have persuaded him, by the subtlest argumentation, to believe."

\* Cf. Gellius, xviii. 2. 9 *quod non perdidisti, habes; cornua non perdidisti; habes igitur cornua; cf. also Seneca, Ep. xlviii.*

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similar words, when nobody is ever deceived by them except during the discussion? It is things that lead us astray: it is between things that you must discriminate. We embrace evil instead of good; we pray for something opposite to that which we have prayed for in the past. Our prayers clash with our prayers, our plans with our plans. How closely flattery resembles friendship! It not only apes friendship, but outdoes it, passing it in the race; with wide-open and indulgent ears it is welcomed and sinks to the depths of the heart, and it is pleasing precisely wherein it does harm. Show me how I may be able to see through this resemblance! An enemy comes to me full of compliments, in the guise of a friend. Vices creep into our hearts under the name of virtues, rashness lurks beneath the appellation of bravery, moderation is called sluggishness, and the coward is regarded as prudent; there is great danger if we go astray in these matters. So stamp them with special labels.

Then, too, the man who is asked whether he has horns on his head<sup>a</sup> is not such a fool as to feel for them on his forehead, nor again so silly or dense that you can persuade him by means of argumentation, no matter how subtle, that he does not know the facts. Such quibbles are just as harmlessly deceptive as the juggler's cup and dice, in which it is the very trickery that pleases me. But show me how the trick is done, and I have lost my interest therein. And I hold the same opinion about these tricky word-plays; for by what other name can one call such sophistries? Not to know them does no harm, and mastering them does no good. At any rate, if you wish to sift doubtful meanings of this kind, teach us that the happy man is not he whom the crowd

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appellat, ad quem pecunia magna confluit, sed illum, cui bonum omne in animo est, erectum et excelsum et mutabilia<sup>1</sup> calcantem, qui neminem videt, cum quo se conmutatum velit, qui hominem ea sola parte aestimat, qua homo est, qui natura magistra utitur, ad illius leges componitur, sic vivit, quomodo illa praescripsit, cui bona sua nulla vis excutit, qui mala in bonum vertit, certus iudicii, inconcussus, intrepidus, quem aliqua vis movet, nulla perturbat, quem fortuna, cum quod habuit telum nocentissimum vi maxima intorsit, pungit, non vulnerat, et hoc raro. Nam cetera eius tela, quibus genus humanum debellatur, grandinis more dissultant, quae incussa tectis sine ullo habitatoris incommodo crepitat ac solvitur.

- 10 Quid me detines in eo, quem tu ipse pseudomenon appellas, de quo tantum librorum compositum est? Ecce tota mihi vita mentitur; hanc coargue, hanc ad verum, si acutus es, redige. Necessaria iudicat, quorum magna pars supervacua est. Etiam quae non est supervacua, nihil in se momenti habet in hoc, ut possit fortunatum beatumque praestare. Non enim statim bonum est, si quid necessarium est; aut proicimus bonum, si hoc nomen pani et polentae  
11 damus et ceteris, sine quibus vita non ducitur. Quod bonum est, utique necessarium est; quod necessarium est, non utique bonum est, quoniam quidem necessaria sunt quaedam eadem vilissima. Nemo usque eo dignitatem boni ignorat, ut illud ad haec in diem utilia demittat.

<sup>1</sup> *mutabilia* Haupt; *mirabilia* MSS.

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<sup>a</sup> *e.g.* Gellius, xviii. 2. 10 *cum mentior et mentiri me dico, mentior an verum dico?*

# END OF SAMPLE TEXT



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