
INTRODUCTION

1 SENECA'S LIFE AND WORKS

Born at Corduba (modern Córdoba in southern Spain) between 4 BCE and 1 CE into a wealthy equestrian family, Seneca the Younger (hereafter S) was the second son of Seneca the Elder, an acclaimed rhetorician who wrote treatises on declamation, and of Helvia (addressee of *Ad Helviam matrem*, written during S's exile). Though little is known of his life before 41 CE, he studied rhetoric at Rome and claims to have been attracted to philosophy at an early age, citing as his teachers the Stoic Attalus, as well as Sotion and Papirius Fabianus. After a period in Egypt, S returned to Rome in 31 CE, where some time later he secured election to the quaestorship (thus entering the senate), and established a reputation as a brilliant orator. After eight years in exile on the island of Corsica for alleged involvement in the adultery of Gaius' sister Livilla (Dio 60.8), he was recalled to Rome on the initiative of Claudius' new wife Agrippina to serve as tutor to her 12-year-old son, the future emperor Nero.¹

S was closely associated with Nero for more than a decade, going on to serve, when Nero succeeded Claudius in 54 CE, as his adviser and speech-writer. S's treatise *De clementia*, addressed to the new emperor, dates from soon after his accession and offers the young emperor a philosophically informed model of the proper relationship between ruler and subjects.² A powerful figure at the imperial court, S held the suffect consulship in 56 CE. The relatively benign rule of Nero's earlier years was attributed to S's influence, along with that of the praetorian prefect Burrus (Tac. *Ann.* 13.2, 13.4–5, 14.52 and Dio 61.4). But he was also implicated in murkier aspects of Nero's regime, allegedly confecting the emperor's defensive speech to the senate, after the emperor had ordered the murder of his mother Agrippina in 59 CE. Tacitus attributes to S a remarkable ability to conceal his true feelings in his dealings with Nero (*Ann.* 14.56).

S acquired extensive property, including magnificent estates, much of it as gifts from the emperor (Tac. *Ann.* 14.52).³ He is characterised by both Juvenal (10.16) and Tacitus (*Ann.* 15.64) as *praediues* and, unsurprisingly, had his detractors; the accusations of Suillius (a close associate of Nero's

¹ On S's first fifty years see Griffin 1992: 29–66. Her biography remains the most comprehensive, but see also Grimal 1978, Sørensen 1984, Wilson 2014.

² See Braund.

³ For the metaphorical significance of allusions to his property holdings see below, intro. to *Ep.* 12.

predecessor), alleging self-enrichment through extortionate money-lending, are cited by Tacitus (*Ann.* 13.42) and Dio (61.33.9); Dio, indeed (61.10.3), also describes S as debauched. Martial celebrates his generosity as a patron (12.36). In view of his often repeated insistence on the unimportance of wealth (e.g. 4.10–11, 19.4, 42.10–11, 66.22, 98.13) and the salutary effects of poverty (e.g. *Ep.* 17), Seneca has frequently been termed a hypocrite.⁴ Economic relations (ownership, loans, prodigality) certainly play a key role in his writing but these potent concepts are redeployed to operate on a metaphorical level; the economic associations of that key Stoic term *ratio*, for instance, are often in play.⁵ Nero himself is never referred to explicitly in the *EM*, which date from the final years of S's life, after he had fallen out of favour with the emperor (following the death of the praetorian prefect Burrus in 62 CE). The *EM* often urge those who would focus on philosophy to withdraw from the distractions of public office.⁶

S was a prolific author; Quintilian (*Inst.* 10.1.128–9) comments on the variety of his output.⁷ Though the dating of much of his work remains disputed,⁸ he wrote tragedies (of which *Thyestes* and *Phoenissae* are likely to be Neronian),⁹ numerous philosophical treatises¹⁰ and the *Naturales quaestiones* on meteorology and related matters.¹¹ Further works (including the *libri moralis philosophiae*, as well as treatises on marriage and on friendship) survive only in fragments.¹²

The *EM*, a series of letters addressed to a single addressee, Lucilius, constitute S's most substantial surviving work. They offer advice and teaching addressed to an individual friend progressing towards more advanced engagement with Stoic philosophy. Exhortative, apparently confessional, these self-reflexive letters, often presenting S himself as a fallible moral

⁴ Griffin 1992: 286–314, though as she notes, elsewhere S discusses the opportunities for virtue offered by wealth (*De uita beata* 22.3). The motif of hypocrisy is nicely analysed by Jones 2014; S often draws attention to his own failure to live up to expectations (e.g. 75.4, 15–16).

⁵ Von Albrecht 2004: 34–52, Bartsch 2009: 204–5, Habinek 2014: 4.

⁶ E.g. *Epp.* 19, 22, 55, 68; cf. *De otio*, with Williams, arguing that lack of participation may be the right course, if the regime is corrupt, Griffin 1992: 315–66, Bartsch 2017.

⁷ On his range see Volk and Williams 2006: Introduction, Ker 2006, Braund 2015. Graver 2016b offers an analytic bibliography of scholarship on S and his works.

⁸ Griffin 1992: 395–411, Marshall 2014.

⁹ Fitch 1981. On the philosophical relationship between the tragedies and the prose works see Rosenmeyer 1989.

¹⁰ Including *De otio*, *De breuitate uitae*, on which see Williams, as well as *De ira* and *De beneficiis*, on which see Griffin 2015.

¹¹ Williams 2012.

¹² Vottero. The interrelationships between S's works are suggestively discussed by Ker 2006.

exemplum, have been described as ‘tricksily autobiographical’.¹³ While their focus is for the most part on the ethical disposition of the individual, they also offer piecemeal treatment of topics in physics, as well as reflection on how philosophy should be taught.¹⁴

Death, in particular the fear of death and how it is to be tackled, is a dominant theme (*Epp.* 4, 24, 54, 70, 71, 77, 82, 120).¹⁵ The imperial instruction to commit suicide (which, according to *Tac. Ann.* 15.60–4, came in the aftermath of the unsuccessful conspiracy to replace Nero with Piso in April 65 CE) cannot have been unexpected. Tacitus’ detailed account of S’s death offers a complement to and an implicit comment on S’s own reflections in the letters on the prospect of death.¹⁶

2 THE *EPISTULAE MORALES* AND THEIR ADDRESSEE

The title *Epistulae morales* first appears with reference to S’s letters in Aulus Gellius (12.2.3) but may well be S’s own. The precise dating remains disputed (the letters contain only one reference to a datable event, the fire at Lyons of July 64 CE in *Ep.* 91, and even references to the seasons are few). Some scholars argue for a period of composition over two years, 62–4 CE;¹⁷ others take the view that S embarked on the project only in 63 (so that the spring of 23.1 and the spring of 67.1 refer to the same year).¹⁸

124 letters survive. The extant MSS preserve twenty books of variable length but book divisions are unclear for a substantial section of the text. The known divisions are as follows:

Book 1: *Epp.* 1–12

Book 2: *Epp.* 13–21

Book 3: *Epp.* 22–9

Book 4: *Epp.* 30–41

Book 5: *Epp.* 42–52

Book 6: *Epp.* 53–62

Book 7: *Epp.* 63–9

Book 8: *Epp.* 70–4

Book 9: *Epp.* 75–80

Book 10: *Epp.* 81–3

Book 11 begins with *Ep.* 84. The openings of Books 12 and 13 are not known.

¹³ Jones 2014: 395.

¹⁴ Hadot 2014a: 210 on their combination of ethics, physics and paraenesis.

¹⁵ Edwards 2007, Ker 2009a.

¹⁶ Ker 2009a: 257–79.

¹⁷ Mazzoli 1989: 1850–3, Grimal 1991: 219–39, 443–56.

¹⁸ Griffin 1992: 400.

Book 14: *Epp.* 89–92

Book 15: *Epp.* 93–5

Book 16: *Epp.* 96–100

Book 17 begins with *Ep.* 101. The opening of Book 18 is not known.

Book 19: *Epp.* 110–17

Book 20: *Epp.* 118–24

Gellius (*NA* 12.2.3) quotes from what he refers to as Book 22 of the *EM*.¹⁹ It seems, then, that we do not have the complete text as S wrote it. It is also possible that there have been losses from the first twenty books.²⁰ As regards publication, individual books may have circulated separately. The last letter of Book 3 (29.10) refers to Lucilius' expectation of a quotation from Epicurus as *ultimam . . . pensionem*, perhaps suggesting the conclusion of this section of the collection (see also 33.1 and note); some have inferred that Books 1–3 were published together.²¹ Others suppose rather that at least the first seven books (*Epp.* 1–69) appeared as a group.²²

The collection develops from offering practical advice for managing one's emotional stability and ethical disposition in the first letters to a dominant focus on the exploration of more abstract and technical philosophical issues later in the collection (a development against which Lucilius is presented as occasionally protesting, e.g. 121.1: *hoc quid ad mores?*).²³ With the implication that his addressee has attained a more advanced grasp of Stoic thought, this progression itself serves to demonstrate the success of S's teaching.²⁴ Yet the trajectory is not linear; an issue explored in one letter will be repeatedly returned to in later ones. As John Henderson observes, 'the topics handled in separate compositions thicken, trouble and reconceptualise one another'.²⁵ While earlier letters tend to be more recognisably epistolary in articulation and dimensions, a number in later books are decidedly bulky (with 66, 90, 94, 95 coming in at 2,993, 2,919, 4,164 and 4,106 words respectively; S reflects on this at 95.3). The last two extant books, however, return to a format closer to that of the earlier ones.²⁶

¹⁹ Though Hachmann (1995: 237) suggests that *Ep.* 124 marks a logical end point and notes that the letter quoted by Gellius could fit earlier in the collection, e.g. Book 17 or 18.

²⁰ In late antiquity the collection circulated in at least two volumes. Reynolds 17 suggests the possibility that an entire volume of letters may have been lost at an early stage. This is disputed by Cancik 1967: 8–12, but see further Spallone 1995 and Malaspina 2018.

²¹ Russell 1974: 78, Lana 1991: 280–1, Fedeli 2004: 203–4.

²² Griffin 1992: 349.

²³ On the latter part of the collection see Inwood.

²⁴ Cf. Maurach 1970: 199–206.

²⁵ Henderson 2004: 5.

²⁶ Lana 1991: 292–304 gives full details; see also Mazzoli 1989: 1823–5 and the insightful comments of Henderson 2004: 28–9.

The *EM* (in this respect analogous to Cicero's *Ad Atticum*) have a single addressee, Lucilius Junior. Lucilius (hereafter L), an equestrian (44.2), appears to be a few years younger than S (26.7) but a friend of long standing. Brought up in Campania (49.1) and currently procurator of Sicily (45.1), he himself has literary ambitions (8.10, 19.5, 24.19–21, 46.1, 79).²⁷ L, also the addressee of *De providentia* and *Naturales quaestiones*, is known only from S's own work; his historical reality has occasionally been questioned.²⁸ Outside titles, L is named fifty-seven times in *Epp.* 1–69 and thirty-five times in *Epp.* 70–124. S often refers to questions L has asked him or to L's responses to his advice,²⁹ though, as Griffin notes, the 'you' and the 'I' of the letters cannot always be assumed to be biographical.³⁰ Some of the letters appear to have been written from Campania (see intro. to *Ep.* 53), while others (e.g. 104, 110) are apparently written from one of S's villas. According to Tacitus (*Ann.* 15.45, 60), S spent most of his time in Rome after 62, after 64 rarely leaving his house. Miriam Griffin suggests the majority of the letters were probably written in Rome,³¹ though Rome as a place barely features in them.³² As Donald Russell underlines, the correspondence is certainly intended to appear chronological.³³

The studies of Hildegard Cancik (1967) and Gregor Maurach (1970) both underline the importance of appreciating the collection as a whole. The question as to whether this is a 'real' correspondence has prompted much debate.³⁴ Giancarlo Mazzoli summarises different views and suggests the collection is a selection of 'genuine' letters.³⁵ The letters of Pliny (reworked versions of 'real' letters, artfully disposed within individual books) are invoked by Paolo Cugusi as a parallel.³⁶ For Griffin and others, by contrast, the letters are 'a literary fiction'.³⁷ As Marcus Wilson observes, it is perhaps unhelpful to think in terms of a sharp division between

²⁷ *PIR*² L388, Pflaum 1960–1: 1.70 no. 30 and III.961–2. L's portrayal in the letters and elsewhere is discussed by Griffin 1992: 91, 347–53.

²⁸ E.g. by Bourgery 1911: 51; see Gowers 2011. For Schafer 2011: 44, 'Lucilius is Seneca writ small'. Henderson 2004: 42 terms him a 'belittled catachresis for the father of free speech [i.e. the satirist Lucilius] in Latin letters'.

²⁹ 3.1, 19.1, 40.1, 48.1, 50.1, 59.4. See further intro. to *Ep.* 34. Wilson 1987: 112.

³⁰ Griffin 1992: 347.

³¹ Griffin 1992: 93, 358 n. 1.

³² See further intro. to *Ep.* 86.

³³ Russell 1974: 72. He also suggests the possibility (p. 79) that some of later letters were written earlier.

³⁴ Cf. Wilson 1987: 119, Grimal 1978: esp. 441–3.

³⁵ Mazzoli 1989: 1846–50, though Mazzoli 1991 highlights the deftness with which they are often structured. Albertini 1923 also regards the letters as 'real'.

³⁶ Cugusi 1983: 200–3.

³⁷ Griffin 1992: 519. Cf. Bourgery 1911, Cancik 1967, Maurach 1970.

'literary' and 'real' letters,³⁸ though certainly the *EM* are, as Henderson puts it,³⁹ 'scrubbed scrupulously bare of referents and ambient presence' (of the kind one might expect in 'genuine' correspondence) – and thus the more accessible and appealing for later readers.

The degree to which book divisions are important has also provoked disagreement. Cancik highlights their significance, at least in relation to earlier books (1967: 138–51). Most scholars agree in seeing Book 1 as a clearly demarcated introduction.⁴⁰ Some books have been read as showcasing particular themes (e.g. Book 4 focusing on the role of *virtus*,⁴¹ and Book 6 scrutinising S's own deficiencies).⁴² Yet in a number of other books it is harder to trace a potentially unifying thread (contrast, in this respect, the letter collections of both Cicero and Pliny).⁴³ Maurach and others have tracked a wide range of thematic patterns cutting across or linking books, which offer alternative ways of structuring the collection. Maurach emphasises sequences (such as *Epp.* 1–10, 12–15, 16–32) and terms a number of letters situated mid-book 'division letters'.⁴⁴ Cancik and Maurach both stress the thematic coherence of the collection, regarding it as close in conception to Horace's *Epistles* (on which see below).⁴⁵ For some, notably Cugusi, the organising features of the collection have been generated retrospectively through editing.⁴⁶ The overall artistry of the *EM* has received increasing attention in recent years; Schönegg, for instance, characterises the collection as a 'philosophical work of art'.⁴⁷

3 LETTERS AS A GENRE

Although some readers have been inclined to view the *EM* as essentially a series of essays rather than letters,⁴⁸ much recent scholarship focuses on their epistolary form (while it remains true that some of them, e.g.

³⁸ Wilson 1987: 119.

³⁹ Henderson 2004: 43. Cf. Russell 1974: 77.

⁴⁰ See the editions of Scarpit (b) and Richardson-Hay (who takes issue with the 'cycles' perceived by Maurach) (2006: 22–3), and the suggestive comments of Henderson (2004: 6–29).

⁴¹ Maso 1999: 84; Davies.

⁴² On which see Berno (see further intro. to *Ep.* 53).

⁴³ On the book structure of Cic. *Fam.* and *Att.* see Beard 2002. On the book structure of Pliny's letters see Gibson and Morello 2012: 234–64.

⁴⁴ Maurach 1970: esp. 128–9, 199–206. Hachmann adopts a similar approach, while highlighting somewhat different cycles and points of transition.

⁴⁵ Cancik 1967: 54–8, Maurach 1970: 196–7.

⁴⁶ Cugusi 1983: 200–3.

⁴⁷ 'Philosophisches Kunstwerk', Schönegg 1999.

⁴⁸ Following the lead of Francis Bacon (see further below). Influential has been the view of Williamson, 'Seneca's practice of writing essays as epistles' (1951: 194).

Ep. 47, have relatively few epistolary markers, others are strongly epistolary, e.g. *Epp.* 34, 46).⁴⁹ This form already had a philosophical pedigree.⁵⁰ Though the dating of the letters attributed to Plato remains disputed,⁵¹ Cicero was already familiar with the Platonic *Epistles* 5, 7 and 9, as well as Aristotle's *symboleutikon* addressed to Alexander.⁵² Diogenes Laertius draws on the letters of numerous philosophers in his account of their views and includes three treatise-like letters by Epicurus on philosophical themes (10.35–135). Epicurus was a celebrated letter-writer, to whom are attributed over ninety extant letter fragments (more occasionally come to light from the Herculanum archive and among the Oxyrhynchus papyri).⁵³ Pamela Gordon argues that, while most of these fragments are probably not authentic, their currency attests to the key role played by letters in characterisations of Epicurus by followers and detractors alike. It seems that the correspondence of the early Epicureans circulated widely, sometimes in the form of anthologies, apparently put together in the second century BCE.⁵⁴ These letters functioned as a medium for philosophical discourse, a crucial mechanism in the development of an Epicurean diaspora;⁵⁵ Plutarch explicitly connects Epicurus' letter-writing with the desire to secure converts, *δοξοκοπίας* (*Mor.* 1101B). S refers to Epicurus' letters on numerous occasions.⁵⁶ Epicurean quotations are, for Tom Habinek, 'a way of signalling generic competition with antiquity's most famous writer of philosophical letters'.⁵⁷

As for precedents in Latin epistolography, Horace's verse *Epistles* explore philosophical questions with a distinctively Roman inflection.⁵⁸ The degree to which Cicero's letters engage (if allusively) with philosophical ideas has recently been highlighted.⁵⁹ S was familiar with his letters (as well as with his philosophical treatises; cf. e.g. 100.9),⁶⁰ comparing his own epistolary project with the letters to Atticus, which were evidently well

⁴⁹ Wilson 2001 stresses their protean form. See also Inwood 2007, Edwards 2018a. On the history of epistolography see Cugusi 1983.

⁵⁰ See Inwood 2007: 136.

⁵¹ There are good reasons to suppose the collection was familiar in its current form by the early first century CE (see Morrison 2013: 111–12).

⁵² McConnell 2014: 27, 35–44.

⁵³ See e.g. *P.Oxy.* lxxvi.5077, with Obbink and Schorn *ibid.*, pp. 37–50.

⁵⁴ Gordon 2013.

⁵⁵ See Graver 2016: 199.

⁵⁶ 9.1, 21.3–6. For Inwood (2007: esp. 142–8), Epicurus is a key influence on S's choice of the letter form.

⁵⁷ Habinek 1992: 189–90, n. 10. Cf. Henderson 2004: 29–31, Inwood 2007, Wildberger 2014.

⁵⁸ De Pretis 2002 (exploring their concern with temporality), Morrison 2007. On S's engagement with Horace see further below.

⁵⁹ Griffin 1995, McConnell 2014.

⁶⁰ Setaioli 2003.

known by S's time.⁶¹ Though S himself highlights the contrast between his own philosophically urgent letters and the allegedly mundane concerns of Cicero (118.1–4 with Inwood *ad loc.*),⁶² his letters, like those of Cicero, combine intimacy, humour, self-reproach, emotional intensity and mercurial shifts of tone, if with a much greater degree of self-awareness and a sustained concern with self-transformation.⁶³ All the same, Wilson is surely right to regard S as establishing 'a new branch of epistolography'.⁶⁴ The influence of S's *EM* has recently been tracked in the more worldly correspondence of Pliny.⁶⁵

The potential of epistolary form to convey meaning, brilliantly analysed in Janet Altman's classic study (1982), has fed into much recent work on epistolarity in classical literature.⁶⁶ Texts may gesture towards epistolarity through the deployment of a range of epistolary markers (such as opening greetings or references to letters received).⁶⁷ Particular features of the epistolary structure of the *EM* are fundamental to S's philosophical project. Ancient literary theorists regarded letter-writing as the literary equivalent of informal conversation (e.g. Demetrius, *On style* 225).⁶⁸ Letters, particularly between friends, were distinguished for their colloquial language (see Cic. *Fam.* 9.21 *cottidianis uerbis texere solemus*).⁶⁹ S himself makes much of his conversational style of writing (esp. *Ep.* 75; cf. 22.8, 38.1 *plurime proficit sermo quia minutatim irrepit animo*, 40.1, 65.2, 67.2). This insistence is surely to be related to his assertion at 6.5 of the superiority of personal encounters to written text in inculcating sound ethical practice. If the letter comes closest to oral exchange, the letter collection instantiates the relationship of habitual familiarity, which is the most efficacious for philosophical teaching.⁷⁰ The potency of S's first-person voice, in part at least a function of the epistolary genre, gives this text a compelling urgency.⁷¹ If a prime function of letters, as Cicero notes, is to express friendship, this does not imply that they are of interest only to the author and addressee. Occasionally indeed S refers explicitly to

⁶¹ Pace Shackleton Bailey 1965: 60–76. See Setaioli 1976, Cugusi 1983: 168–73 and *Ep.* 21.

⁶² On Cicero's letters as an 'anti-model' see Lana 1991: 261.

⁶³ On the texture of Cicero's letters see Beard 2002, Hall 2009, White 2010.

⁶⁴ Wilson 2001: 187. Cf. von Albrecht 2004: 2.

⁶⁵ Henderson 2002: 84–5, Marchesi 2008: 14–15.

⁶⁶ Trapp 2003, De Pretis 2003, Morello and Morrison 2007, Marchesi 2008, Gibson and Morello 2012, Whitton 2013, Martelli 2016, Leach 2017.

⁶⁷ On epistolary *formulae* see Trapp 2003: 34–8.

⁶⁸ Russell and Winterbottom 1972: 211. Cf. Cic. *Q. fr.* 1.1.45 = SB 1 *quia cum tua lego, te audire, et quia, cum ad te scribo, tecum loqui uideor*.

⁶⁹ Coleman 1974: 277. On epistolary style see further below.

⁷⁰ Edwards 2018a: 336–7.

⁷¹ Inwood 2005: 346–7. Cf. Nussbaum 1994: 337–8.

readers of the future, as at 8.2 *posterorum negotium ago; illis aliqua quae possint prodesse conscribo*; ⁷² any reader may choose to assume the role of Lucilius, to feel herself interpellated. ⁷³

Epistolary form is particularly suited to enhancing the reader's awareness of her relationship to time. ⁷⁴ 'Each new epistle re-situates the author differently in a new time, a new mood, sometimes in a new place', as Wilson observes. ⁷⁵ The discontinuity of the series, each letter ostensibly anchored in a particular (if unspecified) day, focuses attention on the importance of the present moment, ⁷⁶ while repetition renders explicit the extension of the series in time. ⁷⁷

How long should a letter be? S asks (45.13), toying with his epistolary form. The issue of how and when an individual letter should draw to a close is often raised, e.g. 11.8, 22.13, 26.8. These playful questions echo on a formal level one of the collection's most profound concerns, what might be an appropriate *clausula* for the individual human life (77.20). ⁷⁸ While the disappearance of the final books (see above) is probably an accident of fate, S (no doubt expecting Nero's fatal instruction) anticipated this would be an open-ended text (61.1–2): *hanc epistulam scribo, tamquam me cum maxime scribentem mors euocatura sit*.

4 STOIC TERMS AND CONCEPTS

Particularly in the earlier letters Epicurus figures prominently, while the term 'Stoic' does not occur until 9.19 (where, indeed, S emphasises a view common to both Stoics and Epicureans). Yet the *EM* constitute an important (and enormously influential) document of Stoic philosophy. The elements of philosophy (analysed and discussed at 89.9–13, for instance) comprise physics (including metaphysics, theology and psychology, as well as the workings of the physical world), logic (including epistemology and linguistics, as well as reasoning and argument) and ethics. While later letters are more concerned than are earlier ones with the theoretical framework of Stoic teaching and the exploration of technical philosophical questions, ⁷⁹ all the letters are firmly underpinned by Stoic thinking. ⁸⁰

⁷² Cf. 21.5(n.), 22.2, 64.7–8.

⁷³ Edwards 2018a.

⁷⁴ Sangalli 1988: 53. On time in S see further Lévy 2003, Edwards 2014.

⁷⁵ Wilson 2001: 167.

⁷⁶ Ker 2009a: 175.

⁷⁷ Armisen-Marchetti 1995: 547.

⁷⁸ See Ker 2009a: 118–19.

⁷⁹ See Inwood, Scarpata (a) on 65, Hachmann on 66, Stückelberger on 88, Schafer 2009 on 94 and 95.

⁸⁰ Stoic concepts and terminology in the *EM* are systematically analysed by Wildberger 2006.

Even for a reader of the earlier letters, some familiarity with key Stoic terms and concepts will be useful.⁸¹

For Stoics, human happiness is wholly contingent on virtue, *uirtus*. Philosophy, serving as the framework through which to actualise virtue consistently, is essential if we are to live fulfilled lives (see 90.1). Insofar as they share in reason, *ratio*, humans are united in community with the divine (76.9–10, 92.27); S senses the divine primarily through natural phenomena (see e.g. *Epp.* 41, 90.28).⁸² *Ratio* is sometimes qualified as right reason, *recta ratio*, to distinguish it from more practical forms of understanding.⁸³ Philosophy, *philosophia*, is the pursuit of right reason (89.6).⁸⁴ Through the use of perfected reason, humans are able to live in accordance with nature, *natura*, thus achieving a happy life, *uita beata* or *beatus status* (*natura* in turn is informed by divine *ratio*, 90.16). This is the highest good, *summum bonum*. We must understand that ultimately only virtue, *uirtus*, matters (cf. e.g. 74.24, 92.24), only the pursuit of virtue is morally good, *honestum*, and everything else (e.g. status, wealth, health, family or any other matters beyond our control) is a matter of indifference; we must learn to set aside the errant judgements of other people (*Ep.* 7).⁸⁵ Yet it is in choosing between indifferents, *indifferentia*, that we exercise virtue; some indifferents, such as health, food, shelter, are naturally preferred, *commoda* or *petenda* (i.e. they accord with a life according to nature; cf. e.g. 74.17), while others, e.g. illness, are dispreferred, *incommoda* or *fugienda*, so that we are right to avoid them (see *Epp.* 66 and 67). At the same time actions are to be judged virtuous not by their results but purely in terms of the intentions motivating them (14.6).

The would-be philosopher strives to attain the right mental disposition, *bona mens* (110.1). For Stoics the mind, *animus*, is wholly corporeal.⁸⁶ Yet the body itself is liable to be a distraction from the pursuit of virtue, if we place too much importance on its pains and pleasures (65.16–22).⁸⁷ The would-be philosopher pursues mental tranquillity, *securitas*, by working to overcome the turbulent force of the emotions, *affectus* (sometimes translated as the passions), e.g. desire for riches, which derive from incorrect judgements, in particular by training impulse, *impetus*, so that is in

⁸¹ An excellent recent introduction to Stoic thought is Reydams-Schils 2005. See also Long's lucid analysis (1996) and the essays in Inwood 2003. For a comprehensive analysis of Stoic concepts in the *EM* see Wildberger 2006.

⁸² See Setaioli 2014b.

⁸³ Wildberger 2006: 249–52.

⁸⁴ The term *sapientia* is often treated as equivalent but see the distinction drawn at 89.4.

⁸⁵ Cf. 75.15, 94.52 on repelling the *populi praecepta*, 99.16–17, 123.6.

⁸⁶ Long and Sedley 1987: passage 45 C–D, Long 1996: 224–49.

⁸⁷ On the suffering body in the *EM* see Edwards 1999, 2005b and Chambert 2002.