

SENECA
DE OTIO
DE BREVITATE VITAE

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INTRODUCTION

1. AUTHOR AND DATE: INITIAL PROBLEMS

Born into a provincial equestrian family of Italian extraction at Corduba (modern Córdoba) in southern Spain, Lucius Annaeus Seneca (c. 1 BC – AD 65) was raised and educated from an early age at Rome. Partly through the influence of his father, whose five surviving books of *Controversiae* and one of *Suasoriae* (both from his *Oratorum et rhetorum sententiae diuisiones colores*, in at least twelve books) amply reflect his own deep interest in rhetorical theory and practice, the younger S. studied declamatory rhetoric in preparation for a career as an advocate and in politics. But his extensive philosophical education under the Stoic Attalus, Sotion and especially Papirius Fabianus drew him at a young age to the Sextians, so named after Q. Sextius, the sect's founder; heavily influenced by Stoicism and Neopythagoreanism, it was Rome's only native philosophical school.¹ S.'s lifelong attachment to Stoicism was formed in these years, and his early devotion to philosophy may help to explain why he delayed his entry into political life, becoming quaestor when he was past thirty. He won fame as an orator but also the disfavour of one emperor in AD 39, allegedly through Caligula's jealousy of his success; and then of another when, in Claudius' reign, he was accused of adultery with a sister of Caligula and exiled in 41 to Corsica, where he remained until he was recalled in 49 through the intercession of Agrippina, was appointed praetor and became tutor to the young Nero.² After Nero's accession in 54 S. was, with the praetorian prefect Sextus Afranius Burrus, one of the two powers behind the throne who oversaw five or so years of good government. But by the time of Burrus' death in 62 S.'s control over the increasingly wayward emperor had declined to the extent that he sought permission in that year to withdraw from public life, only (according to Tacitus) for Nero to refuse both that request and a later one made in 64 (*Ann.* 14.53–6, 15.45.3; cf. Suet. *Nero* 35.5). After 62, however, S. was in effect living in retirement, a phase (62–5) in which he produced or brought to completion the bulk of his extant prose writings: his 124 *Epistulae morales*, the *Naturales quaestiones* and *De beneficiis* (the latter after AD 56 and completed by 64). Charged with complicity in the Pisonian

¹ Rawson (1985) 94–5, 318; Sextius in fact wrote in Greek.

² For more detail on the first fifty years, Griffin (1976) 29–66.

conspiracy, S. was forced to commit suicide in 65 (Tac. *Ann.* 15.60.2–64.4, Dio 62.25.1–2).

The surviving fragment of *De otio*, in which S. argues that devotion to philosophy from early youth (i.e. total abstention from public service) or upon retirement from a career is fully in accordance with Stoic principles (2.1–2), is conventionally dated to AD 62 or soon afterwards and read as a philosophical justification of S.'s own *de facto* retirement in that year.³ As for the date of *De breuitate vitae*, most modern scholars have chosen between two main proposals, 49 and 62.⁴ Both dates have been manipulated to allow S. to be free of, or at least contemplating withdrawal from, the *negotium* of political life when he urges Pompeius Paulinus, his presumed addressee and the *praefectus annonae* charged with overseeing the Roman grain-supply, to retire to philosophy; for (the standard question goes) how to reconcile the message of *Breu.* with S.'s own life and career if it was written when he himself was actively engaged at court? If written in 49, 'could a prospective praetor . . . have hoped to sound convincing when he insisted that *otium* was preferable to *officium*?'⁵

But such questions are perhaps too confining, accommodating *Ot.* and *Breu.* to the facts of S.'s life rather than allowing the texts to be evaluated on their own terms, as if the alleged contradictions of both works (how could S. write either if very much *in officio*?) can only be resolved by the convenient dating of *Ot.* and *Breu.* and/or by invoking an 'external', biographical explanation for them. The position taken here, however, is that the philosophical 'message' of *Ot.* and *Breu.* stands regardless of S.'s particular circumstances at the time of writing (whether in office or in retirement or between the two); and that their philosophical importance is too easily compromised or obscured when biographical considerations are allowed to (over-)influence their dating and interpretation. In the case of *Breu.*, S.'s seemingly impractical advice to Paulinus has further encouraged a biographical approach. Unless S. has an ulterior motive for the work, how easy is it to imagine the *praefectus annonae* promptly retiring in the name

³ For proponents of 62 or thereabouts, Dionigi 48–9 and 49 n. 2; he too holds that *Ot.* was motivated by S.'s withdrawal in 62, suspecting that the work was written before his retirement and not as a *post euentum* justification of it (pp. 52–4).

⁴ For proponents of 49, Hambüchen (1966) 28 and n. 2; of 62, 143 and n. 1. See also Hambüchen 23–5 and Griffin (1962) 104 against Justus Lipsius' case for a date in the early 40s on the strength of 18.5 *modo modo intra paucos illos dies quibus C. Caesar perit* . . . (n. *ad loc.*).

⁵ Griffin (1962) 111.

of philosophy from his position of vital strategic importance⁶ to Rome and the empire?⁷ If S.'s message is taken to be more general, how many of his more 'ordinary' Roman readers were in a position to contemplate philosophical retirement without concern for their practical responsibilities in life? So also in *Ot.*, where S.'s argument that abstention from public life is fully compatible with Stoic principles presupposes that the best existence for the *sapiens* is one of self-sufficient isolation from the everyday world – surely no practical possibility for the great majority of S.'s audience. The challenge, taken up below, is how to account for this idealistic dimension to both *Ot.* and *Breu.* without presuming a biographical explanation for either work.

2. THE *DIALOGUES* IN CONTEXT

Ot. and *Breu.* are two of the twelve books, each dealing with an aspect or subject of Stoic ethics (ten treatises in all, as *De ira* occupies books 3–5), preserved under the title *Dialogi* in the *Codex Ambrosianus*, our principal MS. These ten treatises represent only a selection, probably arranged after his death,⁸ of S.'s *dialogi*. It is unclear whether he himself used the term *dialogi* of his writings, but late in the first century AD Quintilian refers to S.'s abundant output of *et orationes . . . et poemata et epistolae et dialogi* (*Inst.* 10.1.129). By *dialogi* Quintilian apparently means all of S.'s prose works apart from his speeches and letters; but none of those works is a *dialogus* in the conventional Platonic or Ciceronian sense of a 'real' conversation or debate between named characters in a social setting. How to explain this anomaly? The suggestion that *dialogus* denotes a Greek literary form such as the 'diatribe' has rightly won little favour.⁹ A more promising explanation for the title is that it refers to *dialogus* in the technical rhetorical sense of a branch of

⁶ For which 18.3n. on *orbis . . . rationes*.

⁷ Hence Griffin's hypothesis ((1962) 104–7) that *Breu.* was written in 55, when Faenius Rufus was made *praefectus annonae* as part of a politically motivated redistribution of high political offices at Rome; Paulinus, S.'s father-in-law, had to make way for Rufus. *Breu.* is therefore tactical in a face-saving way, supplying the 'official' reason for Paulinus' retirement (he had served his time, was fit for higher things etc.). Highly speculative, but Griffin is careful to stress that this 'secondary purpose' ((1976) 407) accompanies S.'s primary philosophical interest in the competing claims of the contemplative as opposed to the active life.

⁸ *Pace* Schmidt (1961), esp. 257–8 (countered by Griffin (1976) 518–19).

⁹ Griffin (1976) 413–14, 508–9, and cf. p. 26 below.

the figure prosopopoeia, i.e. words attributed to a definite or indefinite speaker.¹⁰ The more familiar Latin term for this technique is *sermocinatio*; if derived from the Greek term (διήλογος) for this recurrent feature in S.'s writing (e.g. *Ot.* 1.4, 6.1, 6.5, 7.2; *Breu.* 3.5, 7.6, 7.8), the title *Dialogi* may also have helped to assimilate his works to the tradition of the philosophical dialogue extending back to Plato.¹¹

While the declamatory fashion of the age is unmistakably reflected in S.'s writing (e.g. in his use of *sermocinatio*), the nature and novelty of his enterprise in *Ot.* and *Breu.* are conditioned by three other basic factors:

(a) *The Stoic background*¹²

After the foundation of the Stoic school at Athens by Zeno of Citium (335–263 BC), Zeno's teachings in logic, physics and ethics, the three standard parts of Hellenistic philosophy, were refined and systematized by his successors, chief among them Chrysippus of Soli (c. 280–207), the third head of the school. Chrysippus' became the standard formulation of Stoicism as a holistic system, complete and self-contained in its different parts, and with a basic emphasis on divine *ratio* (= god, *logos*, mind) as the governing principle of the rational, living and providentially ordained universe. Humans share in the cosmic reason which pervades the universe, so that to live in accordance with our own rational nature is to live in accordance with universal nature. Only the Stoic sage (*sapiens*) who has attained the perfect reason embodied in god (= divine *ratio*) can achieve virtue, the only Stoic good, and live the truly happy life. Not surprisingly, the perfect *sapiens* is hard to visualize in real life and, even if models *do* suggest themselves,¹³ he is phoenix-like in his rarity;¹⁴ hence the developments of the so-called Middle Stoa, a stage associated with the innovations of Panaetius of Rhodes (c. 185–110 BC), Posidonius of Apamea in Syria (c. 135–50 BC) and Hecaton of Rhodes (early first century BC) and leading, in ethics, to a shift away from the remote figure of the *sapiens* to the more

¹⁰ Lausberg §§820, 822.9. ¹¹ Costa (1994) 1 after Griffin (1976) 414–15.

¹² Basic bibliography: *CHHP*, L–S, Pohlenz, Rist (all listed in Conventions and abbreviations pp. x–xii); Arnold (1911), Long (1986), Sandbach (1989), Sharples (1996).

¹³ Notably the younger Cato at *C.S.* 2.2–3, 7.1; cf. Lucan 2.284–325, 380–91.

¹⁴ Cf. *Ep.* 42.1, Alex. Aphrod. *Fat.* 199.18 Bruns (= *SVF* III 165.24–5 = L–S I 61 n2); nor did the Stoic masters themselves claim to be *sapientes* (Quint. *Inst.* 12.1.18 = *SVF* I 15.19–24; Plut. *Mor.* 1048e = *SVF* III 166.22–6; further Brunt (1975) 12 n. 17).

ordinary situation of those progressing towards virtue. Panaetius in particular is credited with concentrating more narrowly than his predecessors on practical ethics, abandoning the *sapiens* as the Stoic behavioural model.¹⁵ After the rise of Stoic philosophy at Rome in the second and first centuries BC, with Panaetius and Posidonius important catalysts, this interest in practical ethics culminates in the marked emphasis on 'philosophy as a way of life' in Seneca and in the Greek writings of Musonius Rufus (c. AD 30–100), Epictetus (c. AD 55–135) and Marcus Aurelius (AD 121–80).

Panaetius' emphasis not on the perfect *sapiens* but on the philosophical progress of more ordinary humans extended to political philosophy. The early Stoics apparently showed little interest in weighing the merits of different regimes and in favouring particular kinds of constitution.¹⁶ Zeno wrote a *Republic* which differed from Plato's in envisaging a city *only* of the wise, not one governed by the wise for the common benefit of all. This 'impossibly idealistic society'¹⁷ gave way to the Chrysippean conception of the world as a universal city; universal not in the sense that it included all mankind, but in that it united 'gods and sages wherever they may be'.¹⁸ The relevance of Zeno's *Republic* to contemporary Greek society was of a negative kind, as the work condemned the world as it is by describing 'not only the ideal society of the wise, but the wise man's attitude to present society'.¹⁹ For Chrysippus too all regimes in the real world are in error;²⁰ and even though the *sapiens* is duty-bound 'to serve the state unless something prevents him' (*Ot.* 3.2 and n.), the only state or community promoting life in accordance with cosmic reason and natural law is the universal city. In later Stoicism, however, the effort to clarify for ordinary people the practical significance of Stoic ethics led to a shift of emphasis 'from man's first to his second community',²¹ i.e. from the cosmic to the localized city (e.g. Athens, Carthage etc.); at this point the relative merits of different regimes were debated. So in a Roman context Panaetius,²² but Diogenes of Babylon

¹⁵ Cf. Cic. *Fin.* 4.79; P. Donini in *CHHP* 727.

¹⁶ Cf. Erskine (1990) 71, suggesting that 'Stoic thought had a democratic bias' (rebutted by Vander Waerdt (1991) 199–200); Erskine 73 himself rebuts the views that the early Stoa especially favoured (i) a mixed constitution, or (ii) kingship.

¹⁷ Erskine (1990) 41.

¹⁸ M. Schofield in *CHHP* 768 and (1999) 67–73.

¹⁹ Erskine (1990) 41–2.

²⁰ Cf. Plut. *Mor.* 1033f, *SVF* III 80.17–19, with further citations in Vander Waerdt (1991) 202.

²¹ Vander Waerdt (1991) 204.

²² Cf. Brunt (1975) 17 'It was recognized, most emphatically by Panaetius, that the state answered human material needs and fulfilled men's natural and reasonable

(c. 240 – c. 152 BC), the fifth head of the school, appears to have been ‘first responsible for modifying the scope of Stoic political philosophy in such a way as to make it responsive to the needs of practical politics’.²³

For Stoics in the early Empire, however, ‘the claims of citizenship of the universe come to dwarf those of the existing societies in which we find ourselves: the cosmic perspective increasingly overshadows the vantage point of ordinary life’.²⁴ So S. in *Ot.*, distinguishing the two commonwealths, *maior* and *minor* (4.1), urging that the *sapiens* can best serve the megalopolis in retirement from the distractions of service to its lesser counterpart (cf. 4.2), and arguing that, try as he might, the *sapiens* will never find *any res publica* that will either tolerate him or be tolerated by him (8.1–3). Our task below is to reconcile this detached, cosmic perspective with S.’s (Panaetian) emphasis on practical ethics and philosophy as a way of life in the ‘real’ world.

(b) *The Roman philosophical tradition*

For S., as for Quintilian, the outstanding figure in the history of Roman philosophy was M. Tullius Cicero, the great orator and statesman (cf. *Ep.* 100.9, *Inst.* 10.1.123). Roman philosophical prose was not unknown before Cicero,²⁵ but his prolific writings, many dating from his period of extraordinary productivity in 45–4, set in place a basic Latin philosophical vocabulary and medium independent of the Greek tradition from which they were derived. But if for Cicero philosophy was ‘a training for public oratory and a *pis aller* for public life when in retirement’,²⁶ for Seneca the situation was apparently different, philosophy an early priority which delayed his entry into public life. Beyond these personal factors, however, times had changed: even though in the late Republic philosophy was still essentially a Greek subject with many Greek philosophers at Rome, Athens was in decline as the philosophical centre of the Mediterranean world, Alexandria and Rome in the ascendant, fewer young Romans studied in Greece, the

impulse for cooperation.’ For Panaetius’ alleged advocacy of the Roman Republican system as the best form of government because of its mixture and balance, Brunt (1975) 17–18 with Devine (1970) 331.

²³ Vander Waerdt (1991) 209.

²⁴ M. Schofield in *CHHP* 770, stressing as ‘important for understanding the political thought of the Hellenistic age that this *is* a later development’ (his emphasis).

²⁵ Background: Rawson (1985) 282–97. ²⁶ Griffin (1988) 140.

Sextians taught a 'Roman' philosophy, and S. himself was raised in a domestic environment which brought him into close contact with committed Roman philosophers such as the Sextian Papirius Fabianus, who worked in Latin; and S. came of age in an era when, for Romans of sufficient wealth and standing, the philosophical life offered a realistic alternative to the more traditional career and *cursus honorum*.²⁷ In this intellectual climate philosophy was for S. 'not something essentially Greek, for which he might, like Cicero or Lucretius, be a missionary among the Romans. It was not something which *had* to be done in Greek if it were to be done seriously and in one's own voice . . .'.²⁸ He was engaged in 'primary philosophy (rather than exegetical or missionary work) in Latin',²⁹ thinking and writing creatively in his own language,³⁰ and so (on the debit side) more elusive than Cicero as a source for Hellenistic ideas; but this independent attitude also reinforces his standing as 'a rare example of first-order Latin philosophy',³¹ a fact too often underestimated in modern assessments of his philosophical originality and importance.

(c) *From Republic to Empire*

In the late Republic and early Empire a favoured thesis in the rhetorical schools was *sitne sapientis ad rem publicam accedere*.³² In Cicero's day politics was, in general terms, 'the most honourable way of life, and retirement before old age badly in need of defence for a senator'.³³ The same attitude extended down to S.'s time and beyond,³⁴ but the arrival of the Principate inevitably modified the nature of Roman political involvement. To what extent, then, do *Ot.* and *Breu.* capture the mood of the age by subjecting the traditional Stoic commitment to public life to renewed scrutiny in a time of authoritarian and, especially under Nero, increasingly wayward rule?

Despite Augustus' efforts to present his regime as a restoration of authority to the Senate and people, the realities of his monarchical rule inevitably

²⁷ Inwood (1995) 63–7 for the general picture (an excellent sketch).

²⁸ Inwood (1995) 67. ²⁹ Inwood (1995) 68.

³⁰ Cf. Griffin (1976) 7 'Seneca's choice of Latin as a medium is a sure sign that his interest in writing was at least as great as his interest in philosophy: serious philosophers in his time and immediately after wrote in Greek.'

³¹ Inwood (1995) 75. ³² Cic. *Tōp.* 82, in Griffin (1976) 315.

³³ Griffin (1976) 344 and n. 2 for references.

³⁴ Griffin (1976) 344 with Liebeschuetz (1979) 110.

infringed upon the cherished Republican ideal of *libertas*. But after a painful period of transition under Augustus the senate did not decline into insignificance; far from it.³⁵ What *does* appear to have changed under the Empire, however, is individual motivation for and in public life: because 'senators could no longer feel that they were serving their own state', 'actions are judged less by success or public approval and more by the voice of conscience'.³⁶ Turning within themselves for guidance, individuals could find assistance in philosophy, which was 'now more than the interesting game it had once been. Ancestral custom and the code of a ruling class no longer provided an adequate guide to living. Philosophy and the philosophical expert had to fill the gaps'.³⁷ Already in the Republic the expansion and increasing diversity of the empire contributed to the gradual erosion of Roman national identity and, consequently, to the rise of individualism and cosmopolitanism, both of which found a rational basis in Stoicism.³⁸ Stoicism arguably contributed to 'the growth of a humanitarian spirit at Rome' in the first century AD,³⁹ while the Stoic emphasis on austere living ran counter to the *paralysis agitans* which Barton⁴⁰ associates with the restless appetite in the late Republic and early Empire for the new and the unknown, the exotic and (not least in the gladiatorial arena) the ever more horrific, an appetite resulting from the world being opened up to Rome. And in an age which witnessed a rise in magic, astrology and other forms of superstition offering spiritual comfort in an uncertain world,⁴¹ the Stoic was fortified by his belief in the providence of cosmic reason against the unpredictability of life under the likes of Caligula and Nero; whatever befell him, he was capable of 'the emotional ecstasy of the martyr who feels completely his own man because he delights in going to meet all the trials that can be presented to him'.⁴² Astrology also reinforced Stoicism's appeal as a philosophy which correlated human and cosmic reason: granted his dignified place in the universal structure, his future there to be read in the stars, 'this picture of himself gave back to a Roman noble the dignity lost through humiliating submission to an emperor'.⁴³

³⁵ Talbert (1984), esp. 488–91 with Millar (1992) 341.

³⁶ Liebeschuetz (1979) 109, 112. ³⁷ Liebeschuetz (1979) 112–13.

³⁸ Moore (1917) is still rewarding.

³⁹ Currie (1966) 78; (1973) 21 for Stoicism preaching 'a liberal humanitarianism'.

⁴⁰ (1992) 85.

⁴¹ Liebeschuetz (1979) 119–39 with Williams (1978) 171–84.

⁴² Williams (1978) 172. ⁴³ Liebeschuetz (1979) 125.

In the early Empire the Stoic emphasis on virtuous action also served as an antidote to the corruption and hypocrisy of court politics.⁴⁴ According to Tacitus, in AD 59 Thræsea Paetus walked out of the senate in protest when thanks were being offered for Nero's safe delivery (by matricide!) from the threat posed by Agrippina (*Ann.* 12.12.1; cf. 16.21.1). There followed a long-running feud with Nero which culminated in Paetus' virtual non-attendance in the senate from 63 onwards (cf. *Ann.* 16.22.1) until 66, when he was forced to commit suicide after his Stoicism was brought as one of the charges against him by Cossutianus Capito, Tigellinus' son-in-law (*Ann.* 16.22). Already by 62 Stoicism was a dangerous allegiance, Rubellius Plautus its first victim when Tigellinus frightened Nero with the insinuation that Plautus 'had the arrogance of the Stoics, who breed sedition and intrigue' (*Ann.* 14.57.3).⁴⁵ The punishment of these and other Stoics has given rise to the theory, now generally discredited, that there was an active Stoic opposition under Nero.⁴⁶ The Stoics were not against monarchy *per se*;⁴⁷ in common with other schools they condemned tyranny, but the fact is that 'there was always a core of senatorial, or better, upper-class resistance to emperors and their power – feelings of friction and resentment that were hardly limited to adherents of Stoicism';⁴⁸ Nero victimized non-Stoics as well, as his persecution of the Pisonian conspirators amply attests (nor can it be shown that the conspiracy was Stoic in inspiration). Located in this broader picture of resistance, Paetus' actions are better viewed as those of 'a courageous and upright Roman senator who held Stoic views, not as a Stoic philosopher who happened to be a senator at Rome'.⁴⁹

Despite this qualified view of the Stoic 'opposition' under Nero, S.'s emphasis in *Ot.* on the corrupt condition of the state as a legitimate reason for abstaining from public life (3.3; cf. 8.1–3) has predictably been interpreted as a justification for (his own) retirement under a harsh emperor. But whatever the relevance of *Ot.* to S.'s life, far more important (and interesting) in

⁴⁴ A. Wallace Hadrill in *CAH*² x 305–6.

⁴⁵ Cf. Griffin (1989) 20–1 for philosophy brought under suspicion in the late Republic and early Empire because of its potential (i) to divert its followers from participation in public life, (ii) to instil doctrines that were impractical or incompatible with public life, and (iii) to encourage recalcitrance towards authority.

⁴⁶ For the theory examined, Griffin (1976) 363–6 and (1984) 171–7.

⁴⁷ But for at least the early Stoa cf. n. 16 above.

⁴⁸ Shaw (1985) 47, part of a spirited argument (and update of the case) against the notion of a 'Stoic opposition' at Rome.

⁴⁹ Wirszubski (1950) 138.

the history of ideas is the cosmic consciousness which he promotes in *Ot.* as an escape from the pressures and involvements of the 'everyday' world. If in the early Empire philosophy was one form of therapy to which people could look for relief and guidance in an age of anxiety, *Ot.* and, in a different way, *Breu.* both contribute significantly to this therapeutic effort.

3. *DE OTIO*

(a) *The view from above*

A precious compensation in exile, S. asserts in the *Consolatio ad Heluiam*, written to ease his mother's sorrow over his banishment to Corsica (AD 41–9), is that wherever we go in the world we are accompanied by universal nature and by our own virtue (8.2). As a citizen of the universe the Stoic can never be exiled (8.5), for 'every place is his country' (*patria*, 9.7): to contemplate the workings (the planetary movements etc.; 8.6) of cosmic reason, of which human *ratio* is a portion, is itself to participate in the universal community, local civic identity being of little consequence by comparison. Hence his repeated emphasis in the *Consolatio* on this 'view from above',⁵⁰ that cosmic consciousness which transforms the meaning of exile by changing the compass of our understanding; for 'the view from above... leads us to consider the whole of human reality, in all its social, geographical, and emotional aspects, as an anonymous, swarming mass, and it teaches us to relocate human existence within the immeasurable dimensions of the cosmos. Everything that does not depend on us, which the Stoics called indifferent (*indifferentia*) – such as health, fame, wealth, and even death – is reduced to its true dimensions when considered [like S.'s exile in the *Consolatio*] from the point of view of the nature of the all.'⁵¹ From this cosmic perspective S. naturally ends the *Consolatio* on a positive note (20.1–2): released from *occupatio* in the 'everyday' world, the exile is free to rediscover the 'world *qua* world'.⁵²

⁵⁰ As 'a perennial motif in ancient philosophical writing', Rutherford (1989) 155–61.

⁵¹ Hadot (1995) 245; cf. (1998) 173 for his concept of 'the discipline of desire' ('Human affairs, when seen from above, seem very tiny and puny; they are not worthy of being desired...').

⁵² Cf. Hadot (1995) 258. For the liberating effects of S.'s exile, also [Sen.] *Oct.* 381–90; but for a grimmer picture, *Pol.* 18.9 – no less strategic (with Ovidian colour; Griffin (1976) 62), albeit in a very different direction, than upbeat *Helu.* 4.1–2 and 20.1–2.

This same contrast between micro- and macrocosmic perceptions of the world is basic to *Ot.*, most obviously in the distinction drawn in 4.1–2 between the localized *res publica* and its universal counterpart. The philosopher who moves from the *minor res publica* to a level of cosmic consciousness in its *maior* counterpart now fully lives *only* through his participation in the megalopolis; the world is his *patria*, his *domus*, his *urbs*, terms whose evocative Roman significance is inevitably lost in their translation to the cosmos.⁵³ Central to the literary creation of a Roman national consciousness and sense of identity in (and before) the Augustan age is the emotional draw of *patria*, whether in the positive Virgilian representation of Italy as the object of longing and as a near perfect utopia (e.g. *Aen.* 1.380 *Italiam quaero patriam*, 7.122 *hic domus, haec patria est*; cf. the *laudes Italiae* at *G.* 2.136–76), or as the focus of Ovid’s exilic nostalgia and lament (e.g. *Tr.* 3.3.53 *cum patriam amisi, tunc me perisse putato*). Through this deeply ingrained sense of attachment to Rome and *patria*, the Augustan writers contributed much to the consolidation of central power and to the intimidating capacity of the institutions which safeguarded *res Italas* (cf. Hor. *Ep.* 2.1.2–3); exiled by Augustus, himself of course *pater patriae* (cf. *Tr.* 2.181, 574, 3.1.49, 4.4.13), Ovid for one paid for his non-conformity at Rome by his exclusion not just from the literal *patria* but from *patria* as the emotional centre of his Roman ‘belonging’. S. fully recognizes the force of this draw to one’s *patria* (cf. *Ep.* 66.26 *nemo . . . patriam quia magna est amat, sed quia sua*), even though his own Spanish origins might have predisposed him to think of his *patria* (Spain or Italy?) in a more flexible way. In *Ot.* and *Helu.*, however, his emphasis on Stoic cosmopolitanism liberates the self from this strong sense of local affiliation and allegiance, thus offering scope for individual development and autonomy regardless of any local restrictions.

The cosmopolitan Stoic is also protected against the intimidating sanctions of the state. Living each day as if a complete life (*Breu.* 7.9), superior to fortune (*Breu.* 5.3), complete in his happiness (*V.B.* 4.4) and incapable of losing his inner freedom (*Ep.* 75.18 *absoluta libertas*) whatever his external circumstances, the *sapiens* can no more be affected by exile than by any other state-imposed punishment or threat. In this respect *Ot.* can be read as a politically challenging blueprint for how to survive in the empire by living *extra potentiam principis* with one’s self-respect and individual autonomy

⁵³ For cosmic *patria*, *V.B.* 20.5, *Tr.* 4.4, *Ep.* 28.4, 102.21 (Ciceronian: *Rep.* 1.19.5); for *domus* and *urbs*, Cic. *Diu.* 1.131 and *N.D.* 2.154 with Pease.

intact; or as a compromise piece which keeps access to the *minor res publica* open while providing an escape-route to its *maior* counterpart (cf. 4.1 *quidam eodem tempore utrique rei publicae dant operam, maiori minorique*).⁵⁴ Whether *Ot.* is dated to the reign of Claudius or Nero, to c. 49 or c. 62, S. thus promotes a cosmopolitan vision which may also be self-serving, distancing him from (his own involvement in) the ugly political realities of his day. But *Ot.* can simultaneously be read as a more disinterested enquiry into the relationship between different Stoic world-perspectives. S.'s imaginary interlocutor in 1.4, a Stoic committed to *actio* in the *minor res publica*, represents the microcosmic 'view from below' in contrast to the cosmic consciousness and 'view from above' urged by S. through the course of the fragment. The jolting effect of S.'s recommendation to withdraw from public life and from involvement with the 'irrational' majority (1.1–3) is to force a change of perception: 'The utilitarian perception we have of the world, in everyday life, in fact hides us from the world *qua* world. Aesthetic and philosophical perceptions of the world are only possible by means of a complete transformation of our relationship to the world: we have to perceive it *for itself*, and no longer *for ourselves*.'⁵⁵ *Ot.*, like *Breu.*, moves and jostles the reader towards 'a complete transformation' of this personal kind, and to a reassessment of how we order our priorities in life. Even if the ideal of retirement in the manner of the *sapiens* in *Ot.* and as urged on Paulinus in *Breu.* remains far beyond us in practical reality, our exposure to the idea may still disconcert us towards a beneficial form of self-examination.

(b) *Date, addressee and related problems*

The approach taken thus far is based on no assumptions about the date of the work, its addressee's identity or its possible autobiographical significance. In combination, these three problems have long (over-)influenced the modern interpretation of *Ot.*, but with significant difficulties which are briefly surveyed below. The question of whether or not *Ot.* is complete at its transmitted end also remains to be addressed.

S. may well have identified his addressee in the lost opening sentence of *Ot.* Such is his practice in all of the *Dialogues* but *Tr.*,⁵⁶ where Serenus opens

⁵⁴ Cf. Momigliano (1969) 249 'World-citizenship [sc. 4.1–2] is an alternative solution to the citizenship of the individual State, when the individual State proves to be unsatisfactory.'

⁵⁵ Hadot (1995) 254.

⁵⁶ Discounting *Pbl.*, its opening also lost.

the imaginary debate by addressing S. by name, the latter reciprocating when he begins his reply in 2.1. In others S. occasionally names his addressee in the course of the work (Serenus at *C.S.* 5.1, 6.8, *Tr.* 4.1, 17.12; Paulinus at *Breu.* 18.1), but the loss of the opening section of *Ot.* is compounded by the absence of any identifying vocative later. Moreover, the name is effaced in the table of contents in the *Codex Ambrosianus*,⁵⁷ its restoration to Serenus only conjectural; but Annaeus Serenus, prefect of the watch under Nero (Plin. *N.H.* 22.96), is still commonly accepted as S.'s addressee, not least because his addressee's 'ardent and stubborn, yet open and honest'⁵⁸ personality as revealed in his imagined words at 1.4 etc. is in keeping with Serenus' character as represented in *C.S.* and the opening stages of *Tr.*⁵⁹ At *Ep.* 63.14, written in 63 or 64, S. movingly describes his grief at Serenus' death, which occurred (according to Plin. *N.H.* 22.96) when the latter was still prefect. Tigellinus held that office in early 62, subsequently becoming praetorian prefect after Burrus' death in that year. If Serenus succeeded Tigellinus as prefect of the watch in early 62, he died in that year or soon after; but if he preceded Tigellinus as prefect (rather more probable), he died no later than early in 62.⁶⁰

If, then, *Ot.* is addressed to Serenus (itself far from certain), the work would seem to have a *post quem non* of 63 at the very latest – a scenario which allows S. to have composed the work in the general period of his own withdrawal from court. Three main factors have been cited in support of this convenient dating of *Ot.* to c. 62, but each is open to objection; the third also usefully leads us to the problem, taken up in (iv) below, of *Ot.*'s (in)completeness at its end.

(i) Several thematic parallels with the *Epistulae morales* indicate that *Ot.* closely anticipates that later collection (62–5).⁶¹ But they are insufficient *in themselves* to prove a close temporal relationship, as S. may well revert in the *Epistulae* to themes explored considerably earlier;⁶² and stylistic analysis of *Ot.* yields no firm evidence to support the date only suggested by the parallels.

⁵⁷ For the table, Reynolds ix. ⁵⁸ Griffin (1976) 354 n. 2.

⁵⁹ For what little is known of Serenus, Griffin (1976) 77, 89 and n. 8, 253 with *PIR*² 1 p. 104 no. 618 and *RE* 1 2.2248 *Annaeus* 18.

⁶⁰ On the controversy, Griffin (1976) 447–8.

⁶¹ Dionigi 51–2 sets out the parallels.

⁶² Cf. Griffin (1962) 113 on the weakness of a parallel argument for *Breu.*'s late date on the strength of thematic connections between it and the *Epistulae morales*.

(ii) *Ot.* allegedly contains several historical/autobiographical allusions. S.'s second main proposition as set out in 2.2 (*ut possit hoc aliquis emeritis iam stipendiis, profligatae aetatis, iure optimo facere...*) has been interpreted as an allusion to his own proposed retirement at a relatively advanced age after years of service to Nero.⁶³ But the allusion grows fainter when his emphasis on retirement in old age is seen specifically to answer his interlocutor's commitment in 1.4 to Stoic active service until death. Despite the suggestive coincidence between S.'s emphasis on the active study and teaching of philosophy in retreat (2.2) and his own active retirement (cf. *Ep.* 8.1–2 *in hoc me recondidi et fores clusi, ut prodesse pluribus possem... posterorum negotium ago. illis aliqua quae possint prodesse conscribo*), his theme in 2.2 is woven into a tight sequence of argument that resists simple autobiographical dissection. As for the survey in 3.3 of the various 'official' Stoic grounds for exemption from public service,⁶⁴ the first (the state too corrupt to be helped) has invited comparison with Tacitus' indictment of Neronian Rome at e.g. *Ann.* 14.15.3 (AD 59) *inde gliscere flagitia et infamia, nec ulla moribus olim corruptis plus libidinum circumdedit quam illa colluuiis*; for the second (the *sapiens* lacks sufficient prestige or power), *Ann.* 14.52.1 (AD 62) *mors Burri infregit Senecae potentiam, quia nec bonis artibus idem uirum erat altero uelut duce amoto, et Nero ad deteriores inclinabat*; for the third (exemption because of illness), *Ann.* 14.56.3 (after S. was refused permission to retire in 62) *rarus per urbem, quasi uoletudine infensa aut sapientiae studiis domi attineretur*,⁶⁵ 15.45.3 (after permission was refused in 64) *ficta uoletudine, quasi aeger neruis, cubiculum non egressus*. But despite these suggestive parallels, the grounds for exemption in 3.3 are surely too well attested before S., too conventional rather than personally revealing,⁶⁶ to lend unambiguous support to an autobiographical reading.

Further difficulties arise in 8.2–3. True, no exception is apparently made for Rome when (8.3) S. claims that no state is ever to be found which could either tolerate or be tolerated by the *sapiens*.⁶⁷ Of his two familiar *exempla*, the hostility of Athens to Socrates and Aristotle (8.2) has been interpreted as a thinly veiled allusion to the persecution of philosophers, especially Stoics, under Nero; and S.'s Carthage, in constant political turmoil and notorious

⁶³ Dionigi 102–3. ⁶⁴ Dionigi 104–6.

⁶⁵ Pohlenz II 157 claims that at *Ann.* 14.52–6 Tacitus drew on *Ot.* and *Tr.* as biographical material.

⁶⁶ 3.3nn. on *si... possit, si parum... res publica* and *si uoletudo... impediēt* with Dionigi 79–86; the point is well made by Ingresso (1988) 112.

⁶⁷ The words *nullam* [sc. *rem publicam*] *inueniam quae...* (8.3) surely undermine Ingresso's claim ((1988) 112–14) that Rome is in fact distinguished *positively* here from the negative stereotypes of Athens and Carthage.

for its corruption and barbaric cruelty, has predictably drawn comparison with Nero's Rome.⁶⁸ But the parallel is fundamentally misguided. Rome is inevitably implicated along with Athens, Carthage and any other *res publica* as an environment unsuitable for the *sapiens*. Whoever the emperor, whether Augustus or Nero, 'good' or 'bad', Rome *must* appear to the remote *sapiens* as a city corrupted by the vices of its population, which (after 1.2–3) inevitably lives in a state remote from the ideal *res publica* envisaged by the *sapiens*. From this detached (cosmic) perspective S.'s attack on Nero's Rome – if *Ot.* is indeed taken to be Neronian – is not so much *ad hominem* as *ad homines*: Rome's corruption is no different from that of any other community. But if S.'s treatment of Athens and Carthage is still pressed into service as an allusion to Nero's Rome, the dating of the treatise to c. 62 remains problematic. In observing that when S. refers to Athens and Carthage 'his condemnation inevitably involves Rome', Momigliano for one proposes that 'a date about AD 49 is made probable by the close similarity of thought between the *De otio* and the *De breuitate uitae*'.⁶⁹ Claudius' Rome is apparently no less liable than Nero's to Athenian and Carthaginian abuses.

(iii) *Ot.*'s thematic relationship to *Tr.*, which is (also?) addressed to Annaeus Serenus, further complicates the dating of *Ot.* Serenus' change of philosophical position between *C.S.* (itself after 47)⁷⁰ and *Tr.* identifies *C.S.* as the earlier work;⁷¹ there an avowed Epicurean (15.4), he follows the Stoics in *Tr.* (1.10); that his Epicurean phase came first may be inferred from *C.S.* 3.2 *si negas accepturum* [sc. *sapientem*] *iniuriam*, . . . *omnibus relictis negotiis Stoicus fio* (evidently never yet a Stoic). If, then, Serenus' change of philosophical stance is assumed to have been gradual, *Tr.* would appear to be a relatively late work.⁷² At its opening Serenus seeks from S. a remedy for his *displacencia sui* and his 'weakness of good intention' (1.15 *bonae mentis infirmitas*). The prescribed remedy is inner peace (*tranquillitas*); but how to attain it? The best course, claims S. (3.1), is ideally that advocated by the first-century BC Stoic Athenodorus of Tarsus:⁷³ wholehearted engagement in public life, to the mutual benefit of oneself and others. But because political life is in reality so corrupt, Athenodorus reportedly urged in its place retirement

⁶⁸ Dionigi 103–4. ⁶⁹ (1969) 248. ⁷⁰ Griffin (1976) 316.

⁷¹ The conventional view (cf. Griffin (1976) 316) *pace* Grimal (1978) 284–94.

⁷² Grimal (1978) 288 assigns *Tr.* to between 51 and 54 (probably 53), but most scholars (e.g. Costa (1994) 4) cautiously opt for an indefinite date after *C.S.* and before Serenus' death.

⁷³ For whom Griffin (1976) 324 n. 2; the son of Sandon, to be distinguished from the older Athenodorus Cordylion, also of Tarsus.

to the private life (3.2), but not to idle *otium*; through his devoted study and teaching of philosophy the individual can still benefit both himself and mankind in general (3.3–8). In response (4.1–8), S. objects that even if conditions are not conducive to public service, we should withdraw only gradually; but not entirely withdraw, for no state is so corrupt or incapable of improvement that complete retirement is justified. Hence his proposed compromise: *longe . . . optimum est miscere otium rebus, quotiens actiosa uita impeditis fortuitis aut ciuitatis condicione prohibebitur; numquam enim usque eo interclusa sunt omnia ut nulli actioni locus honestae sit* (4.8).

In *Ot.*, by contrast, S. would seem to endorse the Athenodorean position by concluding at 8.3 *incipit omnibus esse otium necessarium, quia quod unum praeferripoterat otio* [sc. the possibility of service in a conducive state] *nusquam est*; and so scholars have found it tempting to identify *Ot.* as the later work, and to detect in S.'s departure there from his position on political participation in *Tr.* a reflection of his changing circumstances under Nero in or around 62.⁷⁴ But an immediate objection to this biographical approach is that S.'s shifting positions in *Tr.* and *Ot.* may well be more experimental than a 'sincere' reflection of his own beliefs on either or both occasions. The search for consistency between them as a guide to S.'s changing aspirations under Nero assumes that a biographical pattern can safely be built out of (or imposed on) potentially unrelated texts. Moreover, Griffin for one argues strongly against the conventional view that in *Ot.* S. accepts the Athenodorean position rejected in *Tr.* 4;⁷⁵ an argument open to serious objections in point of detail,⁷⁶ but which nevertheless draws attention to another major controversy.

(iv) For Griffin *Ot.* is certainly incomplete at its transmitted end.⁷⁷ If S. holds that *otium* is 'necessary for all' (8.3) because of the inevitable corruption in all states, and if public service at any age is therefore ruled out, how would it be possible to embark *in the first place* on a career from which eventual retirement is justified?⁷⁸ How, in other words, could S. pursue the Athenodorean line in 8.1–3 (retirement necessary in all circumstances) and *still* proceed

⁷⁴ The approach is usefully summarized (but not endorsed) by Griffin (1976) 317, 355.

⁷⁵ (1976) 332–4.

⁷⁶ *Ot.* 8.1.n. on *fastidiose*; nor ridicule of an argument of Chrysippus at 8.4 *si quis . . . nauigationem* (8.4 intro. and nn.).

⁷⁷ So for most scholars; Dionigi 42 n. 25 for a survey of opinion.

⁷⁸ Griffin (1976) 332.

to his second topic as set out in 2.2 (retirement allowable after a career in service)? For Griffin, S. must ultimately have qualified or rejected the Athenodorean view (8.3) before taking a different direction in the hypothetical remainder of *Ot.* Perhaps he argued to the effect 'that, if Chrysippus' law could be interpreted as an injunction to *otium*, then, *a fortiori*, it must be all right for a Stoic to choose *otium* in appropriate circumstances. From there the transition to his second topic [in 2.2] would be easy.⁷⁹

But the position proposed here is that S. fully answers his second topic (2.2) in the course of the extant fragment; and that his twofold plan of argument as set out in 2.1–2 *primum... deinde* is internally complete even if *Ot.* is thought incomplete at its very end (to some, an abrupt and lame finish, but see *Ot.* 8.4 intro.). It is important to stress at the outset that S. can hardly disagree in principle with his interlocutor (1.4) on the Stoic commitment to *actio*. Where they diverge is in the interlocutor's failure to see beyond the narrow confines of the localized *res publica* (4.1) and to appreciate that the detached philosopher who resides intellectually in the *maior res publica* (the cosmic megalopolis) is still fully committed to the goal of *actio* – but not, of course, to *actio* in the conventional sense understood by S.'s interlocutor. In terms of 2.1–2, the Stoic who retires to philosophy after a career in service does not abandon *actio* but rather channels his efforts to that end differently, fulfilling his Stoic duty (1.4 *communi bono operam dare*, 3.5 *hoc nempe ab homine exigitur, ut prosit hominibus...*) by teaching (2.2 *hoc... ad alios... referre*) and by personal example (cf. 3.5 *quisquis bene de se meretur hoc ipso aliis prodest, quod illis profuturum parat*). As for the *sapiens* who abstains *uel a prima aetate* from the *minor res publica*, he belongs to the category of philosopher who makes every effort to seek a tolerant and tolerable state in which to serve (8.1, 3); but from his detached perspective in the *maior res publica*, the pervasiveness of ordinary human corruption in its *minor* counterpart forces his hand (cf. 8.3 *incipit omnibus esse otium necessarium*). But even as he withdraws, the *sapiens* remains committed to *actio* both in the form of 'active' contemplation (for 5.8 *ne contemplatio quidem sine actione est*) and in the form exemplified in *Ot.* by Zeno and Chrysippus. Notorious for advocating public service while never serving in office themselves (1.5n. on *'numquid... ibo'*), they nevertheless still served mankind by their philosophical influence and writings (6.4–5). In this way they fully met their Stoic obligation to social *actio* even though they played no active role in the *minor res publica*.

⁷⁹ Griffin (1976) 333.

Both parties delineated in 2.1–2, then, – the *sapiens* who withdraws *uel a prima aetate* and the Stoic who withdraws only after a career in service – remain fully committed to *actio* also in retirement. Hence at 7.4 *alii petunt illam* [sc. *contemplationem*], *nobis haec statio, non portus est* S. accounts for both initial topics in 2.1–2 before he concentrates more closely on the first in 8.1–3: for both retired parties in 2.1–2, *actio* will *always* be the ultimate goal (*portus*), *contemplatio* secondary to it as a necessary but temporary ‘roadstead’ (*statio*) along the way. By thus demonstrating that *actio* remains the priority even in *otio*, S. fulfils the initial task he sets himself in 2.1 *Nunc probabo tibi non desiscere me a praeceptis Stoicorum*. Griffin’s objection remains: if service in the *minor res publica* at any age is ruled out, S.’s second topic in 2.2 would seem to be redundant because a conventional career will never be an option in the first place. But such a career is ruled out by circumstance rather than by will or intention. If an appropriate state could ever be found, the philosopher would serve for as long as he is practically capable of doing so (hence the emphasis on retirement because of age and infirmity in 2.2 *emeritis iam stipendiis, profligatae aetatis*). In effect, S. necessarily keeps open in 2.2 the possibility of service in a conducive, albeit currently non-existent, *res publica*; for the Stoic commitment to serving the *minor res publica* remains valid in principle even if in grim reality the philosopher is prevented by circumstance from ever meeting that commitment.⁸⁰

4. DE BREVI TATE VITAE

(a) Preliminaries

S.’s argument in *Ot.* is driven by the tension between his persona and his imaginary interlocutor, whose words in 1.4 characterize him as a practical if narrow-minded Stoic more at home in the *minor res publica* than in its

⁸⁰ From a different perspective, moreover, S.’s two initial propositions can be seen to refer to different parties, in 2.1 the *sapiens*, in 2.2 the more ‘ordinary’ Stoic who serves the *minor res publica* conventionally enough until (philosophical) retirement. If this difference is conceded, Griffin’s words ((1976) 332) warrant qualification: ‘If *otium* is necessary for a Stoic, how can any kind of public career or *actio*, whenever terminated, be justified?’ True only of the *sapiens* (cf. 8.3 *incipit omnibus* [sc. *sapientibus*] *esse otium necessarium*); a public career remains fully justified for the ‘ordinary’ Stoic who, like S.’s interlocutor, has yet (if ever) to progress to the transforming perspective of the *maior res publica* (cf. 4.1–2). As soon as Griffin’s ‘a Stoic’ is qualified in this way, lifelong abstention (for the *sapiens*) in 2.1 becomes reconcilable with retirement only *after* long service in 2.2.

maior counterpart. This lively approach fully coincides with Nussbaum's characterization of S. and Lucretius as offering 'remarkable models of philosophical-literary investigation, in which literary language and complex dialogical structures engage the interlocutor's (and the reader's) entire soul in a way that an abstract and impersonal prose treatise probably could not'.⁸¹ S.'s idiosyncratic mode of protreptic⁸² in *Breu.* is still more engaging in this way, but with a less organized structure than in *Ot.* Grimal for one attempts to offer a detailed plan of the work,⁸³ but with limited success as S. progresses more by the loose association of ideas than by rigidly following a strict line of argument.⁸⁴ Ch. 1: people complain that life is too short. Not so; life is long enough if well managed. After this *exordium* chs. 2–9 survey the countless ways in which life is squandered, time not properly valued. In 10.1, a summary of S.'s theme so far: the preoccupied (*occupati*, a key word in the treatise) inevitably find life too short. In 10.2–17.6, where (*inter alia*) the attractions of true philosophical *otium* are contrasted with the delusions of *otium* as commonly experienced, the different world-perspectives of the *sapiens* and the *occupati* are gradually isolated from each other. The 'view from above' finally prevails in S.'s admonition to Paulinus to retire in 18.1–19.2, where it soars above the lives mired in *occupatio* earlier in the work; the virtual ecstasy of emancipation in chs. 14–15 and 19 is felt in direct proportion to the suffocating effects of preoccupation which are so dramatically pictured in the rest of the treatise. The two 'halves' of the work are coordinated by the transition to positive instruction in 10.1 *tamen ut illis* [sc. *occupatis*] *error exprobreter suus, docendi* [ch. 11 onwards], *non tantum deplorandi* [chs. 2–9] *sunt*. We shall return to this division below.

(b) *Date and addressee*

Despite continuing controversy, especially about the date,⁸⁵ the position taken here is (i) that S.'s addressee is certainly Pompeius Paulinus, a knight of Arelate (modern Arles; cf. Plin. *Nat.* 33.143) and *praefectus annonae* probably from late 48 to 55. On the assumption that he was the father of the Pompeius Paulinus whom Tacitus mentions as a consular legate of Lower Germany in 55–7 (*Ann.* 13.53.2) and as a member in 62 of a commission

⁸¹ (1994) 486.

⁸² For protreptic as 'the least inept' label for the work, Griffin (1976) 318.

⁸³ In his edition, 5–13; also (1960). ⁸⁴ Traina xv after Albertini (1923) 258.

⁸⁵ P. 2 and n. 4.

overseeing the *uectigalia publica* (*Ann.* 15.18.3),⁸⁶ our Paulinus was probably born not much after 10 BC at the latest; for the younger Paulinus must have been at least 32 and was probably older when, before AD 55, he held the consulship.⁸⁷ The case, now generally accepted, for identifying our Paulinus as S.'s father-in-law rests on Tac. *Ann.* 15.60.4, where Pompeia Paulina is named as S.'s wife (S. refers to her as Paulina at *Ep.* 104.1, 2, 5; cf. Dio 62.25.1).⁸⁸ (ii) *Breu.* was written between AD 49 and 55. If born c. 10 BC, Paulinus, though apparently still vigorous (cf. 19.2 *nunc, dum calet sanguis, uigentibus ad meliora eundum est*), was clearly of an appropriate age to receive S.'s admonition to retire in *Breu.*⁸⁹ The case for dating *Breu.* to before the end of January 50 has been overstated,⁹⁰ while Griffin's argument for 55 is intriguing but inconclusive.⁹¹ Hence the case for an open date between 49 and 55, with S. fully engaged in political life even as he urges Paulinus to retire.

(c) *Theme and interpretation*

Real but not material, time was classified by the Stoics as one of the four incorporeals along with the 'sayable', void and place.⁹² Infinite in extension, time is also infinitely divisible on either side, past and future, of the 'limiting' present. For Chrysippus only the present is fully real in the sense that it 'belongs' (ὑπάρχει) to us in a way that the past and the future do not (they ὑφίστανται 'subsist'). But no time is exactly present; as part of a continuum, the present in the strict sense is itself composed of the past and the future, so that when we talk of *now* performing an action we refer to the looser, 'durative' present, which has reality 'only in relation to my consciousness,

⁸⁶ This against the view (e.g. Herrmann (1937) 110) that S.'s Paulinus was involved in the Neronian commission. For a more detailed account of the father and son distinguished as here, Béranger (1993) 91–101.

⁸⁷ Griffin (1962) 105.

⁸⁸ Paulina (*PIR*² VI p. 299 no. 678) is generally assumed to be his second and much younger wife, but for controversy, Griffin (1962) 106 n. 30 and (1976) 57–9.

⁸⁹ Cf. Griffin (1962) 113 on Paulinus' age. ⁹⁰ 13.8n. on *Auentinum...esse*.

⁹¹ Above, n. 7. The case for 62 (above, n. 4) is also unconvincing. True, in addition to 49–55, the list of known *praefecti annonae* can accommodate Paulinus in 62. But in contrast to 49–55 he faces competition for the post in 62 (from Claudius Athenodorus; Griffin (1962) 105); and Paulinus' doubtful identification with his namesake in Tacitus tells further against 62 (above and n. 86; S. does not refer at 18.3 *tu quidem orbis terrarum rationes administras...* to Paulinus' involvement in the Neronian commission of 62).

⁹² Goldschmidt (1989) 13; L-S I 27D.