Seneca's Attitude Toward Roman Society as Portrayed In his Letters to Lucilius

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SENECA'S ATTITUDE TOWARD ROMAN SOCIETY
AS PORTRAYED IN HIS LETTERS TO LUCILIUS

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Seneca's Attitude Toward Roman Society as Portrayed in his Letters to Lucilius.

I. Life.

Lucilius Annaeus Seneca was born in 4 B.C. and died in 65 A.D. His father, Marcus Annaeus Seneca, was a native of Corduba in Spain, where the younger Seneca spent his early days. From early life he devoted himself to the study of rhetoric and philosophy and won some distinction at the bar. In the midst of his successes he was banished to Corsica by Claudius in 41 A.D. His exile lasted eight years, a period which he spent in study and writing. Through the influence of Agrippa, the empress, he was recalled, made praetor and tutor of Nero, her eleven year old son. His first years there were the bright years of his life for then he stood in high favour. In 57 he was made consul and in the early part of Nero's reign he shared with Burrus, the praetorian praefect, the real administration of the Empire. These two tried to inspire in the young emperor high ideals of government and while he was guided by them, his course was wise and humane. After the break between mother and son the two advisors were less heeded by Nero. Burrus died in 62 and Seneca incurred the monarch's hatred.

(2) Tacitus Annales 13 : 42.
(3) Encyclopedia Britannica Article on Seneca.
"His enormous wealth, whether won from imperial favour, or gained by usury and extortion, his power, his literary brilliance, aroused a host of enemies, who blackened his character and excited the fears or the jealousy of Nero". Realizing the peril of his position he begged to retire from political life on the plea of ill health, at the same time offering the emperor the whole of his enormous fortune; but to no purpose for Nero's hatred followed him. Charged with being an accomplice in Piso's conspiracy, he was forced to commit suicide.

2. Works.

Seneca was without exception the most brilliant literary figure of his time. His writings were many and along various lines. Of these we are to study his letters only. They are arranged in twenty books and are discussions written in a half epistolary style of many of the economic, social and philosophical questions of the day.

The essays are really Stoic sermons. For Stoic creed had by Seneca's time become less of a philosophy and more of a religion. To his work there is a decided religious tendency which strongly suggests the spiritual doctrines of Christianity. In fact some of his writings show such a marked resemblance to Christian teachings that some of the Fathers, probably in admiration of his ethics,

(2) A. Teuffel & Schwabe - Vol. 2. p.39.
(3) Tacitus Anales - 14 : 53.
numbered him as one of the Christians; this assumption lead to the forgery of a correspondence between St. Paul and Seneca which was known to Jerome.

Many of his works are known to us only in fragments. But of all that are extant, his letters (epistulae morales) are most interesting and most important. They were addressed to his young friend Lucilius, the procurator of Sicily, and seem to have been written about 63 or 64 A.D., for he makes mention of the destruction of Lyons which happened about 64 and very often speaks of his own old age. There is much discussion as to the time when these letters were written; some maintain that they were written within two years after his retirement; others, within three; some are quite confident that the letters were divided into books and edited by Seneca himself; others claim that the letters were edited after

(1) Teuffel & Schwabe Hist. of Rom. Lit. p. 47: 9

Senéq'le et St. Paul.

(2) Idem cognovisse sibi (Lipsius) videbatur scriptas esse epistulas morales annis 63 et 64 cum Seneca et memoraret cladem Lugdunensem, factam anno circiter 64 et saepissime senectutis suae faceret mentionem. Hilgenfeld p. 602.

(3) Hilgenfeld p. 602.

--- Lipsius omnino non dubitavit, quin a Seneca ipso epistulae morales essent editae -----, nisi ab illo iam eas esse in libros divisas.
Seneca's death by his friends while Nero was still alive and that
it is certain that the letters were not left ready for publica-
tion. There is also much argument as to the order in which they
were written and edited whether or not the sections are in the same
order now as originally. Many instances are shown where a change
has probably been made.

H. Lehmann together with Haase maintains that Seneca's letters
were not published until after his death. In his works he makes
mention of his retirement from public duties and this did not
occur until 62. We then judge that they must have been written
between the years 62 - 65. According to Lehmann they were written
in this order.

Letters 1 - 18 before December 62.
  " 19 - 23 before spring of 63.

(1) Hilgenfeld, p. 602.

Fredericus Haase primus arbitratus est, has epistulas----,
non esse editas a Seneca,----, sed post eius mortem ab amicis Nerone
etiamtum vivō.

(2) Hilgenfeld, p. 605.

Deinde Haase contendit Senecae epistulas omnino non plane paratas
ad editionem esse relictas.

(3) Hilgenfeld, p. 614.

Primus hoc conatus est H. Lehmann qui illud quoque ab Haasio
recepit, editas esse epistulas post Senecae mortem.----ubi Seneca
otii sui faceret mentionem in quod se recepit anno 62, non ante
illum annum potuisse scribi.----cum legeret---- descriptum in-
cendium Lugduni factum anno 64/65.
Letters 24 - 67 before the spring of 64.
" 68 - 86 before June - 64.
" 87 - 122 before October 64.
" 123 - 124 between October 64 and April 65 in which  
(1) month Seneca died.

Other writers maintain that the letters were not written in  
this order, for letter 14 was certainly written after the persecution  
of the Christians under Nero was begun, which was in 64.

There are extant 124 letters written by Seneca to Lucilius.  
These letters Hilgenfeld has grouped together in three books,  
placing those together which show similar sentiments of philosophy.  
(2) The first book comprises letters 1 - 29; the second, letters 30 -  
88; the third, letters 89 - 124; to the first book may properly be

(1) Hilgenfeld p. 614.
Scriptae ergo sunt ex Lehmanni computatione:
1 - 18 ante Decembrem a. 62. (18;1 December est mensis.)
19 - 23 ante ver a. 63. (23;1 Putas me tibi scripturum—quam  
malignum ver sit.)
24 - 67 ante ver a. 64. (67;1 Ver aperire se coepit.)
68 - 86 ante Iunium a. 64. (86;16 Iunius mensis est.)
87 - 122 ante Octobrem a. 64. (122;1 Detrimentum iam dies sensit)  
123 et 124 inter Octobrem a. 64 et Aprilem a. 65, quo mense  
mortuus est Seneca.
(2) Hilgenfeld p. 614.
Suspiciatur enim Ep. 14 scriptam esse post Christianorum vexationes  
institutas a Nerone anno 64.
(3) Hilgenfeld pp. 626 - 629.
applied the name. "An exhortation to philosophy," though all properly treat of philosophical problems for Seneca was in all and above all a philosopher.

3. Attitude toward Roman Society.

In the consideration of our subject we must confine ourselves to the phases of public life of which Seneca treats in his letters. There is a fascinating personal element in the works, but with this we cannot deal.

Within our province lies the treatment of social problems, such as the maintenance of slaves, the games of the amphitheatre, the extreme Roman covetousness and avarice and their resultant luxuries, Roman religion, the education of the times and of philosophy in the Empire. Of philosophy he has much to say because it had gained such a footing among men and exerted such a powerful influence.

(A) Philosophy.

A member of the Stoic school, he ever strove for its advancement and uplift. The supreme tenet of the Stoics was "virtue" and a desire to conform to the law of nature was its sufficient motive. Though Epicureanism had been introduced at Rome it never attained the position of a school of virtue, and Stoicism became

(1) Hilgenfeld p. 637.

Si igitur quaerimus, quo nomine has aptissime complectamur epistulas, videtur eis esse incrimendum: "adhortatio ad philosophiam".)
the religion of the better classes. It really embodied a system of independent morals and a system of discipline entirely its own. It strove to strengthen the will and break down desires. It taught that man could attain such a high degree of moral excellence that he had nothing to fear beyond this life and that he should regard death with no fear. This system of ethics coincided with Roman nature and for that reason it rose to great prominence in the state.

To such teachings Seneca became a devotee. His letters are full of his moral teachings and as an eminent teacher of virtue he has been recognized throughout the ages. His writings throw much light upon the moral conditions of society under Caligula and Nero.

To live a virtuous life and in accordance with nature is Seneca's main teaching. Reason demands that we live thus. To depend not at all on fortune or what fortune can give, will make one independent and master of himself. We should measure everything by natural desire--for nature demands nothing but food and it makes no difference whether the food be a fine or coarse bread. The appetite should be satisfied in a simple way. This only is necessary that the hunger be satisfied and the thirst quenched. It makes no

(2) Lecky - History of European Morals p. 238.
(4) Ep. 118;12 -
(5) Ep. 41;9 - Haec ratio exigat rem facillimam secundam naturam suam vivere.
difference whether the cup is gold or made of bark or myrrha or
whether it be a Tubertine drinking vessel or the hollow of the hand.
When one is hungry the hand reaches out for whatever is near by.
(1) Hunger spurns nothing. If one lives according to nature never will
he be poor for natural resources are unbounded; if he depends on
public opinion never will he be rich. For nature requires little
(2) but opinion demands much.

In Seneca we find a man possessed of abundant means weary of
court life, crouching under the dire hatred of the emperor, leading
a retired life, consoling himself with his philosophy and as it
were fortifying himself against that awful hour when Nero's wrath
should break forth afresh. In these last few years of his life he
consoles himself with his philosophy it has become his religion and
to it he refers all problems. To Lucilius he writes that none
can live happily—-not even moderately so—-without the aid of
philosophy. If one had only partially devoted himself to this
pursuit then he is not thoroughly happy for true happiness comes
(3) only with perfected wisdom.

In a long life one will meet with hardships just as he does
in a long journey. The men who encounter these hardships and are
forced to meet peril face to face are the happiest and bravest; but
(4) they who remain in idleness are hindrances in life. Man's character

(1) Ep. 119; 3 and 4.
(2) Ep. 45; 7.
(3) Ep. 16; 1.
(4) Ep. 96; 5.
is moulded by adversity and thus it is that wise men are fortified against impending ills.

Seneca writes much of the loss of time and opportunity and the shortness of life. He encourages Lucilius to the employment of every moment, for time alone is given to us. It is customary for us to think of death as yet to come but whatever is past, death holds, therefore it is necessary to embrace every moment given.

In all these allusions to the improvement of time we are forced to think that perhaps Seneca has reference to his own life. Without a doubt he felt the overhanging shadow of Nero's power and an awful suspense not knowing at what moment he might become the victim of the blood-thirsty monarch.

From his letters we are lead to think that society had little attraction for him in his later years. The man whom we now see buried in his seclusive retreat is no longer the prominent political figure of former years. The spirit has been crushed out of him. He is haunted by some intense horror, and life grows darker and darker. As the gloom increases he retires farther and farther into philosophy. It alone is his solace. His abundant fortune has no attraction for him. It is rather a bate for ill will. Yet he was not ever thus; we may be very sure that at one time in his life these

(1) Ep. 96;2.
(2) Ep. 1;3 - Omnia, Lucili, Aliena sunt, tempus tantum nostrum est.
(3) Ep. 1;2.
things of the world enticed him. The luxury of his palace and garden are quite evident proof that at one time he took pleasure in these things. Now his renunciation of them is complete. He has found that they furnish only a pretense of happiness. The reason that one hesitates to devote himself to the life of a philosopher is because he hates to leave the things of the world although he sees the happiness in philosophy. He considers the things which he must leave in order to embrace philosophy, to be of great worth. The gleam and glamour of a worldly life is enticing. There is the same difference between philosophy and a worldly life as between an object which by nature is bright and shining and one which shines only from a reflected light. The one has been noticed and observed merely on account of a splendor which comes from without and which tomorrow will be gone; the other is brilliant through its own brightness. Attention to philosophy makes one bright and noble for his own sake.

The need of philosophy is very great and this is a calling to which one can very conveniently adapt himself; while one is busy about his duties he can think on philosophical problems and thus perfect his mind.

One must constantly strive for higher attainments in the life to which he has given himself—and strength must be added daily. The good derived from philosophy alone can make one happy. He who has much money in his possession cannot right fully be called happy but rather he whose good is of the mind; who uses nature as a guide; whom fortune does not annoy though it turn a most hostile weapon

(1) Dill—Roman Soc. p. 15.
(2) Ep. 21; 2.
against him and hurl it with terrible force. Weapons which bring so much disaster to others of the human race do not even threaten a philosopher. They are no more to be feared than hail which falls with great force, rattles on the housetops, then melts and harms not at all the inhabitants of the house.

Pleasures are natural but by no means necessary. Therefore one is doing enough if he yields to desires of much as he ought and not as much as he is able. Or, in other words, let one provide himself with necessities and not satisfy himself with pleasures.

The foundation and the culmination of the stoic school seems to have been "do not rejoice in vain glories"—He attains the summit of wisdom who knows in what he takes pleasure and does not place his happiness in other's power. They strove to spurn all pleasures except those which had their origin in themselves. Other pleasures do not satisfy the heart; they are trivial and give a man the appearance of being happy when he is not genuinely so. The mind must be active, trusting and above every thing else, resolute. These pleasures do not enable a man to spurn death, endure poverty, curb his desires or bear his sorrows. Philosophy will enable you to endure these things and will never fail you when once you have betaken yourself whither it directs.

(1) Ep. 45;9 and 10.
(2) Ep. 21;11.
(3) Ep. 23;2.

Ista voluptas naturalis est non necessaria;—si modo das illi, quod debes, non quod potes.

(3) Ep. 23;2.—ad summa pervenit, qui scit quo guadeat, qui felicitatem suam in aliena potestate non posuit.
Pleasures are like metals. Those are the most valuable whose veins lie buried the deepest. The pleasures which the multitude of people enjoy are surface pleasures and have a light and disturbing nature, and whatever is enticing lacks a substantial foundation. Pleasures derived from philosophy are stable and reveal much more within them. We should strive then for the things which make us truly happy.

It is necessary, therefore, to trample under foot those things which attract from without, which ensueare us by a promise of this and that good. Vain pleasures are wont to pile up, alluring by their glamour, and unless carefully guarded against they will entice us from the truth. Pleasure unrestrained turns one to grief; but to hold to the course which one deems right is a difficult thing; the inclination is to draw one away from a clear conscience, from honest advices, from upright deeds, from the contempt of chance, from a calm and even tenor of life always striving in one direction. Some people are so stable in their habits that they closely resemble floating objects; they do not go along with any effort on their part but are actually carried along with the tide; as such they are subject to the changes of the water—they are now retarded in sluggish places, now carried along by a swift tide; now they are seized in the midst of a whirlpool; now they travel along the bank in a retarded course; finally caught by another tide they are borne into the sea and are lost in the vast waters. A philosopher must decide what he wishes and with death like grasp cling to his decision.

(1) Ep. 23;5.
(2) Ep. 23;6, 7, 8 entire.
Epicurus has said, "they live poorly who are always beginning to live." Life for them is always incomplete. They can not stand fortified against death, when they are only beginning their life. Some men put off beginning to live until it is time to end life; others die before they have begun to live.

Pleasures are like crimes, though crimes may not be discovered when they are committed, nevertheless anxiety or worry over them does not depart; so with pleasures, one repents after they have been indulged in. They are not complete nor satisfactory. Even though they be not harmful, yet they are fleeting. It is better to devote attention rather on some good that will endure. There is no good but that which the mind derives from itself. virtue alone furnishes perpetual and secure joy. Even if anything does threaten it comes in the shape of clouds which hang low but never entirely obscure the day. But the mind cannot fall into such a state, it has to strive for it.

Pleasures are harmful from the point when they become necessary. Just as too much fertility lays low the crops; as branches are broken by too heavy burden and as too abundant a crop does not come to maturity, so immoderate pleasures hinder the mind from free

(1) Ep. 23;10.
non potest autem stare paratus ad mortem qui modo incipit vivere.

(2) Ep. 39;4.
at haec eo, quod superfluunt, nocent.
development. Let necessity measure out what you possess, for all these superfluous things gradually become a part of one; if they are taken away, then men are wretched because they have come to the point that those things which once were superfluous now are necessary. Men really do not enjoy these pleasures but they have become subserviant to them and they love these evils because they have nothing else. The height of misfortune seems to have been reached when their vices not only delight them but even please them; all chance for remedy seems to have past when those things which (1) once were vices have become habits.

As Seneca maintains that there is no good except that which the mind derives from itself, he naturally emphasizes the full development of the mind and the importance of every one strengthening it. In the first place it is necessary for one's mind to be quiet and fully intent on itself. In this connection Seneca tells us of (2) his quarters above the bath. From his room he can hear all the noise and confusion that is going on beneath him; the splash of the waters, the sounds of the men taking their exercises, the rasping voices of the men all could be heard by him if he would but allow himself to listen. But his mind is so composed that the distracting things affect him no more than the waves of the sea or the falling of water. Far different is he from that race of people who were forced to choose a new site for their city because the

(1) Ep. 39;6.
(2) Ep. 27;3.

nullum autem est, nisi quod animus ex se sibi invenit.

(3) Ep. 56;1 - Supraipsum balneum habit.
falling of the Nile distressed them to the extent that they could (1) no longer endure to live near it.

The mind must be intent on itself and not distracted by external things. All things without may be disturbed provided that within there is no annoyance. What is the advantage of the whole world being silent, if one's feelings are wrought up? Night does not bring quiet to him but he turns restlessly and sleeps only lightly. What he does not hear in his sleep he imagines that he hears. The mind must be calmed and terror and tumult laid aside. The only cure for this restless and fearful condition of the mind is to possess good faith, spurn all showy things and then nothing will call us apart, no confusion of men or birds will interrupt our thoughts which will then be good and sure.

The mind requires quiet and no amount of traveling about will cure it. A change of climate or the sight of foreign lands or cities cannot aid the mind. To travel for the sake of one's health is all well and good when the body is diseased but when the mind is afflicted then the only cure is to lay aside the burden. It is entirely useless for one to go from place to place trying to find some relief when the very thing which he is seeking can be (2) found in any place.

Above all things strive for the perfection of the mind, for (3) health of mind is necessary before health of body. A good mind

(1) Ep. 56;3.
(2) Ep. 28;5.
(3) Ep. 10;4.- roga bonam mentam, bonam valitudinem animi, deinde tuno corporis.
can neither be sold or bought, therefore it is necessary for each one to acquire it for himself. But of all things see that the mind becomes fixed and that you are wishing the same to day as you wished yesterday for a change of wish indicates that the mind is unsteady and that it drifts here and there or whereever the wind happens to direct it. There is this difference between a philosopher and one who is just beginning that life--the latter is moved by these externals, and though he is not overcome by them he is tossed about, but the former is not even moved by them. In the end he will have the most calm mind who perceives that nothing has been added to his mind nor taken from it but that it is always fixed.

As soon as philosophy enters the mind and has gained a favorable place there, it will increase its strength and will grow from the least to the greatest possible power and the result will be that it will produce far more than it received. After the mind has become fixed then it will be ready to meet all emergencies and death can come at any time only to find that the mind is prepared for it. Then prepared for death, it is possible to enjoy life. Each day should be so lived not that it is the last but that if there were need it could be the last, for

(1) Ep. 27;9.
bona mens nec commodatur nec emitur.

(2) Ep. 35;4.

(3) Ep. 38;2.
multa invicem et ipsa generabit et plus reddet quam acceperit.

(4) Ep. 61;1.
our lives are measured not by days or years but by the degree to which we have perfected our minds. In marked contrast to this sentiment of the need for improvement of time, we hear Horace urging all to enjoy the present and think as little as possible about the future.

New occupations arise and we keep putting off the perfecting of our minds by saying, "when I have accomplished this and that, then I will give my whole attention to it," and "when I have done this I will give myself to study." But it is not when we are free from labor that we must employ philosophy; but rather every thing else must be neglected in order that we may attend to this, for which no time is long enough even though life extends from boyhood to the very longest limit of human life.

But if once adopted one must continue in the practise of it or else it will suffer a relapse and it will go back whence it came. There is the same difference between a wise man and one just becoming wise as there is between a man of sound body and one who is just recovering from an illness, severe and of long duration. The one, unless ever on his guard, may suffer a relapse; a wise man cannot fall back. There is this one reason at least why the mind in place of the body should be perfected viz: good health comes to the body only temporarily but the mind is healed forever.

(1) Ep. 61;4.
(2) Horace Odes 1;11.
(3) Ep. 72;2 and 3.
(4) Ep. 72;6.
(5) Ep. 72;6.
A complete cure has been affected if the mind is contented with itself, if it trusts in itself and if it knows that all benefits which are given to mortals and sought by them are centered in itself. But if it has any desire for externals then it is still incomplete. Future joy must be centered solely in itself.

Philosophy once adopted, all things which the crowd desires depart voluntarily and speedily.

Attalus has said, "Sometimes one beholds a dog seizing the bits of bread or meat which his master has thrown to him. What he receives he immediately swallows and awaits more; the same thing happens to us. Whatever fortune casts cut to us we seize without any pleasure on our part." But not so with a wise man. We is not dependent on fortune for his pleasures, for he enjoys those that are contained in himself, great, constant and ever his own.

By the decay of buildings, by material decay which we see around us we are reminded of our passing years. Daily we are dying for daily a certain part of us is lost. As we increase life departs. We pass infancy, boyhood, then youth. Whatever time passed yesterday, has gone forever. We have divided this very day which we are now living with death. But the death which we are accustomed to

(1) Ep. 72;7.
(2) Ep. 72;7.
(3) - Omnia autem, quibus vulgus inhiat ultro citroque fluunt.
(4) Ep. 72;8.
fear is the last death but it is not the only one, for at all times it is at hand.

One day is merely a step of life and one's complete life time is composed of a multiplication of days. One has reached a commendable point when he can say, "I have lived, and whatever course fortune has offered, I have traversed." Then if God adds a tomorrow, he can receive it joyfully. He is most happy and secure who awaits tomorrow with no anxiety.

After the mind has been strengthened, then it must be tested, for in this way alone is there a proof of its power. Demetrius has called a life secure to which no reverses of fortune ever comes, a dead sea. To have nothing by which the mind is ever aroused and to lie in undisturbed peace is not quiet, but a dead calm.

We continue in our erring paths because we do not look back on our past lives and see wherein we have failed. We think about what we are going to do but rarely about what we have done. If we would only look to the past we could correct our faults.

Alexander the Great left the traces of his line of March through India by the cities that he razed to the ground and the races of people that he subdued. But one day he was wounded by an arrow. For a long time he continued in his warfare and kept up the combat: Finally though, the pain from the wound became too

(2) Ep. 12;6.
(3) Ep. 12;9.
(4) Ep. 67;14.
(5) Ep. 83;2.
severe and he was forced to give up. With these words he yielded to his fate. "Men say that I am the son of Juppiter but this wound proves that I am only a man." The same is true of all of us. Men tell us we are wise and we are pleased by their flattery, though we well know how many useless and harmful things we desire.

One can apply a test to himself to find out whether or not he has reached the point of wisdom. The joy of a wise man is centered in himself; he is happy, peaceful and undisturbed; if one is never sad, if his mind is not agitated over the thoughts of the future; if by day and night he is constant in his desires, then he has come to the highest point of wisdom. But if he is restless and seeks his pleasures from without, then he is as far from wisdom as from happiness.

(B) Luxury.

For Seneca, the moralist, the Roman State of his time furnished on abundant field for labor. We might almost say that the last few years of his life at least were out of sympathy with his times. Vice, luxury, and unrestrained pleasures were prevalent throughout the state. In the midst of these, our Stoic monk sees the need of reform and from a secluded nook in his palace he refers all ills to philosophy to be cured. And great indeed was this need of reform, for Roman morals had degenerated.

(2) Ep. 59;14.
In the latter years of the republic and the first few of the empire, Roman morals suffered a great decline. Customs of former generations and religious reverence associated with them sank to a low standard. The simple life adhered to by the earlier fathers became tinged with the vices attendant upon luxury. This corruption was by no means the degeneration of one era but its decline, though slow, was steady. Many forms of vice were introduced into the state as a result of foreign conquest; many resulted from the influence of leading men, such as Antony; and then rose to a climax under the empire; a climax which, perhaps, the wildest excesses of Eastern lands had never reached.

The pristine virtues of Rome were entirely subverted. This condition had been brought about by the anarchy of civil war in the republic, by the fact that the population was becoming more and more heterogenous, and that these strangers brought with them new philosophies, customs and gods. Perhaps no literature or philosophy, skeptical or audacious as they might be, could ever have produced such an effect. Religion no longer had any influence toward morality nor did any feeling of reverence or sanctity prevail. In these conditions philosophy took the place of the old religion and tried to institute some reforms. The importance of religion was dragged down and cheapened by the deification of the emperors.


Foreign gods, bringing with them their immoral legends became allied with those of Rome. Scepticism was increased by means of the theatre, and the crowds applauded the lines of Ennius to the effect that the gods, though real beings, take no care for human affairs. With such a spirit of irreverence the way was begun for men to fall into all sorts of oriental vices and immoralities.

Every form of vice and crime was rife in the state. This degeneration began when first her citizens began to be actuated by a love for gold. Pristine virtue was a thing of the past. Nor were these evils entirely native but rather the heritage of the conquered lands. Tacitus is authority for the statement that luxury of the table was at its acme during the years between the battle of Actium and the accession of Vespasian. (1) Vast fortunes represented as much waste. Rome was the cess pool of the world, her harbour was easy of access, and known to the world on account of her former glories, she now attracted the attention of remote peoples and became the cosmopolitan center of the universe. Peace of long standing, comparative security on the seas, and freedom of trade only tended to enhance her popularity. Delicacies of every land from the western confines of her boarders to the incense bearing Ganges were carried into her port. Enormous fortunes were spent in the accumulation of marbles from Paros, Laconia, Phrygia and Numidia for the erection of these gorgeous palaces; jewels, aromatics, costly ivory, bronze and ancient plate adorned their homes.

(1) Dill - Roman Society p. 66.
(2) Dill - Roman Society p. 66.
Their palaces were reproductions from fairy land. On all sides was seen the lavish expenditure and luxury of the times.

"The vices common to all great cities flourished with rank luxuriance in the capital of a society extremely depraved and soulless." The chief vices were meanness and servility, the pursuit of money by every artifice and compliance. They possessed little of the sense of honour which forms an exterior bulwark even to feeble moral principles among us.

Strong, healthy moral fibre had been weakened by the strife for wealth and luxury; vices of all sorts had undermined natural instincts and modesty; unrestrained selfindulgence had fostered cowardice and cruelty; culture had produced vanity and put to flight lofty ideals; men were in a state of restless ennui.

Enormous fortunes were amassed and the influence of their attendant evils were felt; Crassus of old Republic days was fabulously rich and is said to have left, after enormous expenditure, £1700000; but here is Seneca under the Empire, who has acquired wealth three or four times greater than that of Crassus.

Regardless of the fact that he is the wealthiest man of his times, he has now separated himself from the enjoyment of his vast fortune and his time entire is devoted to a life of philosophy.

(1) Merivale - History of the Romans.
(2) Dill - Roman Society p. 304.
(3) Dill - Roman Society p. 66.
With powerful invective he denounces the evils of the time. He has much to say about riches and how little they offer when compared with Nature. One may possess gold, silver, statues, paintings and the luxuries of the greatest artisanship but they only tend to make him desire more; while if he would but live by nature there would be an end to his desires. When a little has been acquired man's avarice prompts him to acquire more and in thinking about increasing his wealth he forgets to use what he already possesses. In order to do this he stoops to various methods until he becomes subserviant to his fortune. Men should only possess that which is necessary and that which is sufficient for him; for joyful want is an honorable possession.

In order to become a good philosopher he should give up riches; therefore many people postpone becoming wise because they fear poverty. Riches are a hinderance to wisdom because such problems as his slaves are constantly harassing him. If one wishes to be free in mind then he must either be poor or conduct himself as a poor man.

Many excuses are offered why one does not begin the life of a wise man, e. g. "My possessions are not yet large enough. After I have increased them I will give myself to this pursuit"—but

(1) Ep. 16:8 and 9.
(4) Ep. 17:3 and 5.

Multis ad philosophandum obstitere divitiae.-----si vis vacare animo, aut pauper sis oportet aut pauperi similis.
philosophy is of supreme importance and should be prepared first of all things. Another may argue, "I wish to provide a means of livelihood." Granted that Philosophy does hinder one from living well, it does not prevent a noble death. Armies have endured want of every thing; have lived on the roots of herbs and have endured the worst kind of hunger all for the sake of another's power; therefore does any one hesitate to endure poverty when it frees the mind from fears? The argument is advanced that one is deprived of the necessities of life. But this cannot be true because a wise man adapts himself to nature and nature demands only a trifle. Do you wait for worldly riches to make you happy, when you can become rich at once through philosophy? Wisdom represents wealth and is given in abundance to anyone who will seek it.

Though riches are enticing they may be spurned and he who thus holds them in light esteem is worthy of a God.

If one wishes to bestow riches on another let him not attempt to do so by money but rather let him take away the desire for money and implant other desires in his heart. Let him recede into

(1) Ep. 17;15.

nondum habeo, quantum satis est; si ad illam summam pervenero, tunc me totum philosophiae dabo.

(2) Ep. 17;6 and 7.

(3) Expectabisse fenoris quaestum aut ex merce compendium——cum fieri possit statim dives? repraesentat opes sapientia, quas culcumque fecit supervacuas, dedit?

(4) Ep. 18;13.
philosophy and all else will come to him.

The greatest riches which one can possess is poverty conformed to the law of nature. A man may have a pleasant family, a beautiful home, may have his coffers full, yet none of these things are in this man but rather they are all about him. Praise in man that which cannot be given nor taken away, which is the man's only true possessions. What is this? A mind and reason perfected in the mind. Worldly riches are a great hindrance to men because they are constantly dragged along with them; while men are seeking for things which will make them happy, at the same time they are fleeing from the things for which they are searching. The shortest way to riches is through the contempt of riches.

The great extravagance of the time is shown in letter 87 where Seneca tells us that it is customary for the Roman youth, as soon as he received his patrimony, to begin to live more lavishly than ever. He secures a beautiful home and as a rule goes in debt for it. His family becomes extravagant and if he should pay all he owes he would be hurled immediately into debt. A man appears rich merely because his household goods glimmer with gold but notwithstanding that, many times he who lives in such splendid parade is

(1) Ep. 27;9.

Divitiae sunt ad legem naturae composita paupertas.

(2) Ep. 41;15.

(3) Ep. 44;7.

quod instrumenta eius pro ipsa habent et illam, dum petunt, fugiunt.

(4) Ep. 62;3. - brevissima ad divitias per contemptum divitiarum via est.
overwhelmed in debt, and surely he can derive no actual happiness (1)
from these things because he is sunk so far in debt.

Not only was luxury to be seen in the homes but also elaborate
parade of it was made on the vehicles of travel. Seneca mentions
conveyances richly embossed; steeds wearing purple trappings and
gaily painted tapestries; golden yolks hang suspended from their
necks and they champ the yellow gold between their teeth. Alluring
(2) as this splendor may be it can make neither master nor animal better.

Man's worth is not valued in dollars and cents, he is great (3)
because he has a great mind and not because his coffers are full.

What makes a man good? The same that makes a God good. He
must needs have something of the divine, celestial and sublime.
But good does not come into all nor will it allow everyone to
possess it, just as a certain region produces one thing and will
not grow another; as here the soil is conducive for the production
of crops and there of grapes; as here trees grow up unbidden and
there grasses; as Tmolus bears her fragrant saffron, India her
ivory; gentle Sabaei her frank incense and the wild Chalybs her
iron. These products were then distributed among nations so that
there might arise the necessary commerce between them and the one
seek something from another and also give something in return.
But after all the greatest good comes from where neither ivory nor
iron can be found. What is the place of greatest good? The mind,
(4) and other things are as nought when compared to this.

(1) Ep. 87; 5 and 6 and 7.
(2) Ep. 87; 8.
(3) Ep. 87; 18.
(4) Ep. 87; 19, 20 and 21.
If through riches or pleasures we fall into evils, then riches are not only not a good but are an evil. Riches inflame the mind, produce haughtiness, stir up jealousies and arouse the mind so that the thirst for money, even though it is injurious to us, delights us.

Whatever does not give greatness of mind or assurance or security but on the other hand creates insolence, excitement or arrogance, this is an evil and should be avoided: Riches do not bestow these advantages on the mind, therefore they are not good.

The beginning of evils is for us to yield to desire, and to surrender ourselves to ambition, fame and to other vain and useless things. Man should cling to the simple life, reject bread and make herbs his nourishment.

Men strive for gold, silver and costly garments but these things are only transient. Seneca has come to realize the worthlessness of riches and confesses that whenever he sees great wealth displayed and a splendid home and great bands of servants and costly couches borne by slaves, he always says to himself that these things are only transient and can slip from one in a single day. This splendour is not lasting but is liable to pass from one even while he is enjoying it.

(1) Ep. 87;31.
(2) Ep. 87;35.
(3) Ep. 110;10.
(4) Ep. 110;17.
Because of the transient nature of riches one should turn rather to true riches and learn to be content with small things and to be great and noble minded. It is disgraceful to have the happiness of life depend upon gold and silver and equally disgraceful for it to depend on what we eat and drink. Even though the things to which you are subservient are small, nevertheless you are still a servant to them. Be genuinely happy and this for your own sake.

Corruption had taken such a hold upon the Roman state that bribery had become quite common even in the days of Seneca for he tells us that money makes and unmakes magistrates. Men are honest and follow honest paths as long as they give returns but they quickly revert to dishonest methods if they promise greater returns.

Parents instill in their children an admiration for gold and silver and the desire infused sinks deeper and increases constantly. Then the whole nation has the same longing and desires wealth above all else; they place the value of it above all else and when they want to appear especially thankful before the Gods they consecrate a part of their wealth to the supreme beings. As a result customs are brought to such a point that poverty is an ill starred word, spurned alike by rich and poor.

(1) Ep. 110;18.
(2) Ep. 115;
(3) Ep. 115;11.
In the works of the poets, riches are praised as the one glory and ornament of life. The immortal Gods seem not to be able to have or give anything better than riches. "The palace of Sol was lofty and gleaming with shining gold" and his "Chariot was of gold, the tongue of this was of gold, golden rims encircled the great wheels, and held in place a silver row of spokes." Then because they wished their age to seem the best, the poets called it the golden age. Even among the Greek tragedians there are those who barter their innocence, safety and good reputation for money. One says, "Allow me to be called most evil if only I may be called rich", another, "If rich, I desire to live; if poor to die." and again, "He dies well who dies while he is still making money."

There is no avarice without its punishment although there is punishment enough in the avarice. Money is the cause of so many tears, so much labor and so many miseries! consider also the daily anxiety attached to it. Money is possessed with greater trouble than it is sought. Some think that a greater trouble cannot exist than for men to endure misery and unpopularity. The rich always complain of their lot and prefer the things they have left to those which they have acquired.

The desires of a rich man are never satisfied but he who has much always desires more. Of what weight is the argument that he cannot devote himself to philosophy because he not yet has enough?

(1) Ep. 115;12, 13.
(2) Ep. 115;14.
(3) Ep. 115;16.
He who has enough never checks his struggle for more, for a rich man never acquires enough.

Some one brings forth the objection that he has too little who barely is not cold, or not hungry or not thirsty. Jupiter has no more than this. Never is it too little which is sufficient and never is it much which is not enough. What is enough for nature is enough for man. After Alexander killed Darius and subdued India he was a poor man for he had none else to conquer.

Money makes no one rich; nay on the contrary it incites a greater desire for money, for the more he acquires the more he longs for.

Riches make people blind and selfish, their happiness is not genuine but rather depends on outward show; but he who lives according to nature receives his happiness from within. As we are wont to say that one has a fever when really the fever has him, so we say he has riches when truly riches have him. These are some of the greatest evils of luxury; it instills in men a thirst for greater riches, it forbids their being merely satisfied but demands that they be gorged and fills them with an insatiable desire for more.

(1) Ep. 119;6.
(2) Ep. 119;7.
(3) Ep. 119;9.
(4) Ep. 119;11 and 12.
Men clamor wildly after riches merely because they have such a dread fear of poverty. If a man, even though rich, would set apart a few days and in that time live content with the cheapest kind of food, with the coarsest clothing, then he would obtain some idea of what poverty is and in all probability, surprised at the result he would exclaim, "Is this what I feared?" Men train themselves for other things in order that they may meet them bravely if there be need. A soldier in time of peace prepares himself for emergency. If one endures poverty for three or four days he will learn that there is no need of a fortune to make him happy. We find the trial of poverty easy but the actual life of poverty is much easier than the test. We would be rich much more securely if we knew that being poor was not so much to be feared.

Epicurus, that master of pleasure, has certain days on which he endures the extremity of hunger in order to see whether, if he were reduced to poverty, he would lack any pleasures or if it would be worth his while to adopt poverty. He boasts that he found that he could live on less than a coin and that he found real pleasure (1) in that life.

But such pleasure ought not to be light and fleeting but ought to be fixed and stable. Water and barley and bits of barley bread are not enjoyable but it is pleasing to enjoy the virtue which comes from that sort of life because no reverse of fortune can take it away. To live thus voluntarily shows how great is the magnitude of man's mind.

(1) Ep. 18;9.
(2) Ep. 18;10.
Philosophy urges one to give up wealth and live in poverty, supplied only by the demands of nature. But man hesitates to give up his wealth and thus fears poverty; he cries out "shall I give up my wealth, my fine clothes and with servants dismissed, shall I go about with my litter unattended and my halls empty?"

It is necessary first to be freed from the fear of death and then from the fear of poverty. As a proof that there is no evil in poverty, compare the looks of poor men and rich men. A poor man's smiles are more frequent and more sincere. There is no anxiety written deep in his soul. If cares ever come to him, they pass merely as light clouds. Of those who are called happy the gayity is forced and not genuine because, while it is not permitted for them to be miserable openly, it is necessary for them to appear happy ever in the midst of the distress eating at their very heart. Far better is it to put away money, home and position and think concerning oneself alone. Then is one known to others as he really is.

This one advantage poverty has, it shows one by whom he is loved. It proves to one that he is loved for his own sake and not for any good which his wealth can furnish. No one is born rich, therefore why should he attain riches?

There are many ways in which the tendency of the Roman mind toward luxury is set forth. Seneca speaks much of the general

(1) Ep. 22;9.
(2) Ep. 80;5 and 6.
(3) Ep. 20;7.
demoralization of the times without giving explicit information as to what form this vice takes. At any rate the Romans have fallen headlong into luxury. Their display of it finds expression in almost every possible way. Above all other things the Roman took great delight in his villa. It was on this that much of his wealth was lavished. We cared not so much for the furniture within the rooms as for the walls, ceilings and columns of the spacious building. Though costly tables of citrus and ivory and priceless antique vases were often found within the villa, yet the main glory and splendour was the costly marbles from Phrygian, Laconian and Numidian quarries.

Seneca describes for us the villa and bath of Scipio Africanus and compares the luxury displayed in the State in his times with the simplicity of the homes of their ancestors. Scipio's villa was built of squared stone, was surrounded by a wall and on each side of the villa towers rose into a rampart. On one side was a narrow bath shrouded in darkness according to ancient custom, for to the ancients the bath did not seem warm unless it was dark. Seneca confesses that he was filled with great pleasure when he beheld this villa. Here in this simple bath, Scipio, that honor of Carthage to whom Rome owed much, bathed his body wearied by his rustic labors. Here in this rude house he lived and endured the hard floor. But present day Romans do not condescend to bathe in such a place. A man seems poor and of low rank unless his walls gleam with great and costly mirrors, unless Alexandrian marble is embellished with

(1) Dill - Roman Society p. 177.
Numidian mosaic; unless everywhere costly and many hued tints are woven together after the manner of a picture; unless the roof is hidden by glass; unless Thracian stone, once a rare sight in any temple surrounds the bathing pools; unless silver waterpipes pour forth the stream of water. In the more elaborate baths there are many statues, many columns not supporting anything but merely erected for the sake of their cost. In fact men of this age have come to the degree of luxury that they are unwilling to tread on anything but gems. In this bath of Scipio there were the very least little cracks in place of windows; these were hewn out of the stone wall in order that the walls might admit the light; but now in place of these small crevices, large windows admit the light of the whole day. By this means men bathe and receive the rays of the sun at the same time and from their pools they can see the sea and the fields. Once the baths were few in number and not at all adorned. Luxuries when first introduced are admired but are relegated to antiquity when new and more extreme fashions are introduced.

But luxury, vices and the neglect of good customs are characteristics not of that age alone but of all times. These are vices of men and not of the times. No age is free from fault. Even in the Roman state of that day we find traces of the modern day graft and political taint. Seneca tells us that outrages have

(1) Ep. 86; 4, 5 and 6.
(2) Ep. 86; 7 and 8.
been committed and then judges bribed; that morals have sunk so low that lust cannot be kept but of religious observances and out of law courts; and that; if ever investigation of the wrong is begun, the wrongs are multiplied and the investigation is conducted on illegal principals. It now seems that one could not be safe without employing corrupt methods.  

He urges that men be temperate in their desires and that thus these evils will be cured. Because they love their vices they defend them and prefer to excuse them rather than to throw them off. Nature gives one the power to do this if he would but employ it. 

Men do not really enjoy these pleasures but they have become subservient to them, and they love these evils because they have nothing else. Misfortune has reached an extreme when men's vices please and delight them and there ceases to be a chance for remedy when those things which once were vices have become habits. 

Vices overwhelm us under the name of virtues. But these vices must be gotten rid of; they must be torn out, root and branch; if we cannot free ourselves of the vices without tearing out the heart, then tear it out too, but the vices must go. 

Pleasure is a vice, therefore it must go. In this statement Seneca has struck the keynote of Stoic philosophy. They forever denounce pleasure and emphasize virtue. Here Seneca is a genuine 

(1) Ep. 97 Entire. 
(2) Ep. 116;8. 
(3) Ep. 39;6. 
(4) Ep. 59;1.
Stoic, though at some other times he may be called an Eclectic. He sees some good in Epicurean philosophy for continually he is drawing the moral of his letter from some teaching of Epicurus.

Especially at the festivals did the Romans allow free play to their desires and love of pleasure. Seneca describes for us the condition of the state during the Saturnalia. This was held late in December at the end of the vintage and harvesting. In nature it early corresponded to the English Harvest Home and the American Thanksgiving Day. In later times it became a season of absolute relaxation and license. Under the Empire the merry making lasted for seven days, and three different festivals were celebrated during the period.

Seneca tells us that then of all times the state sweats. The law of public luxury is granted. Everything sounds of much preparation and there is little difference between the real festival and the preceeding days for the city is in such a tumult. This celebration has become so important that the whole year seems to look forward to the coming December.

On that day, ordinary customs are laid aside; the togas are changed for other garments and all wear the pilleus. It is a time when laws and all restraint are freed. There is much drunkeness and general debauchery and altogether it is a time of great excess.

(1) Ep. 29;11 - Ep. 7;11 - Ep. 17;11 - Ep. 18;14 - Ep. 28;9 - Ep. 26;3 - etc.
(2) Harper's Class. Dictionary - "Saturnalia."
(3) Ep. 18;1.
Seneca criticises the festival and of course does not approve of the general laxity of customs. He says the mind must be schooled in such days to abstain from the pleasures which others are indulging. It is a sure proof of one's strength if he is not drawn into these things. It is much more fortuitous for one to be sober when everyone else is drunk and reeling with wine; it is much more temperate not to mingle with people nor do anything at all the way they are doing it. For it is possible to spend a festival day without excess.

(C) Slavery.

One of the greatest problems with which the Roman citizens had to deal was how to manage their slaves. The Romans had possessed slaves from earliest times. At first the number was few on account of their small households and the simple manner of living. But as luxury became more common, wants increased and in order to satisfy these desires the demand for slave help became greater. The class increased in numbers until they almost equaled the number of free men in the state. As a rule they were subjected to the most cruel treatment of tyrannical masters.

The slaves were by no means of the same class. Those who came from the eastern seats of civilization were far superior to dark ignominious band from other lands. The slave often was the

(1) Ep. 18; 3 and 4.

voluptatis causa ac festorum dierum vestem mutavimus.
equal - both mental and moral - of his master and was often treated as such by the head of the house.

Seneca has almost become modern in his attitude toward slavery. He comprehends the evils of the practice and often cries out against that terrible injustice which makes one man master and the other his servant.

According to Seneca slaves are on the same footing as freemen as far as real worth, but fortune alone marks the difference between them. Masters hold their slaves in such contempt that their treatment is often most severe. They are forced to the most humble tasks and for the slightest misdoing, the dire hatred of the master reigns down upon them. It is fitting that one despise not the condition of slaves for it is possible for him to be reduced to such a rank at any time.

Our ancestors retained a great number of slaves and were kindly disposed toward them, therefore men of today should be able to do so. Often one is inclined to think that a friend worth having is found only in the forum and curia. But if one would search diligently he could find very companionable friends among the number of his slaves. A man is not a servant because he wants to be but rather because fortune had that in store for him. Slaves deserve good treatment for they, as well as their masters, are human. The only difference between a Roman noble and a servant is that fortune fell to one and misfortune was the lot of the other. Not knowing then when we will suffer a reverse in fortune we should live toward an inferior as we would have a superior live toward us.

(1) Ep. 47 - Entire.
Games and Physical Exercise.

One of the principal evils which existed in the Roman state during Seneca's times was the gladiatorial combat. It became known in Rome in the 3rd. Century B. C. The warlike spirit of the warrior race craved a continuation of bloody battle scenes and so they seized upon these shows as a means of satisfaction of those desires.

They were always very popular in the state but under the empire the number of such games was greatly increased. The emperor, himself a lover of bloody scenes, took every opportunity to furnish splendid games in order to win the favor of the multitude. This was easily done for the more of these scenes in the amphitheatre, the more popular the emperor. In addition to these Nero instituted horse racing and gymnastic and musical competitions.

According to Juvenal, the Roman populace were particularly fond of two things, bread and public shows.

The circus and the amphitheatre were necessary both to the people and to the emperor. To the people they furnished means of passing days in pleasure and excitement; to the emperor they were a way to cover up political affairs. These spectacles were of three kinds. First in importance were the combats of gladiators and wild beasts in the arena; second, horse races; third dramatic exhibitions.

(1) Gühl and Köner - Life of the Gks. and Romans pp. 544 and 552.
(2) Inge p. 206.
(3) Inge p. 206.
(4) Inge p. 209.
We shudder at the atrocities of the arena, for them these cruelties held a terrible fascination. People clamored for these sights of suffering and shame. Not only the base rabble displayed this passion and lust of cruelty but even the cultivated and human. Seneca tells us that even the mildest races of men rejoiced at the sight of blood-shed and conflicts delighted them. Everywhere pleasures were sought. Luxury drew men headlong into avarice. Men forgot all honesty and nothing was disgraceful which furnished pleasure to a man. Man's life, here to fore considered sacred, now was given for the sake of amusement of the crowds.

Generally speaking the enlightened class made no effort to or correct lessen the grossness of the rabble. The attitude of Seneca may indeed be considered an exception to the general rule when he displays this modern humanity in opposition to the degrading influence of these shows.

Aside from the brutality of these displays he criticises them on the ground that they are hindrances to the pursuit of philosophy. We are lead to think that Seneca took no interest in these amusements, at least in the last few years of his life. After he had adopted philosophy as his rule and guide. In one place he speaks of the clamour and noise that comes to him from the race course. Immediately he laments the prevailing tendency to train their bodies when so very few persons were training their minds. There is a mad rush made for these games while the "Good arts" are left at home in comparative solitude. He compares the strength of the

(1) Ep. 95;31.
(2) Ep. 95;33.
(3) Ep. 80;2.
bodies of athletes to the weakness of their minds. If men's bodies could be trained to the endurance of battles and spears, of the midday sun on the bloody sands, how much more easily could the mind be strengthened so that undaunted it might receive the blows of fortune. The body needs many things so that it may be strong, but the mind increases of its own accord. It requires much food, (1) drink, oil and a vast amount of training and labor, and the healing of the mind is permanent while that of the body is only temporary. But the care of the body should be a secondary matter with us; it ought not to be humored for he is subservient to many things who takes first thought of his body. We ought to live toward the body not as if we are living on account of the body but as if we cannot live without it. Too much care of the body disturbs us with fears, burdens us with solicitudes, and overwhelms us with injuries.

Seneca denounces the general custom of training the body and of bodily exercise, and maintains that it is especially unbecoming to a learned man. The body develops by training and this proves a detriment to one; for the activity of the mind is impeded by a heavy body. Then too these exercises exhaust one's strength and render him incapable of pursuits of the mind. He insists rather that one give his attention entirely to the mind; this should be exercised day and night. It should be made so stable that neither cold, heat or even old age could dislodge it.

(1) Ep. 80; 2 and 3.
(2) Ep. 14; 1 and 2.
(3) Ep. 15; 2 and 3.
(4) Ep. 15; 5.
Although the mind is to be developed first of all, it is not necessary for one to pour over books and tablets constantly. The mind must be refreshed and revived. Of all exercises Seneca approves of riding because it shakes the body sufficiently and does not hinder one's study. Even while riding one can read, discourse with friends or give attention to another while he talks. Thus we see him regulating even his relaxation moments to philosophy.

Then again Seneca criticises the "spectacula" on the ground that the crowd is injurious to one's morals. He confesses that in his own case he never leaves a crowd with as pure morals as he entered, for he seems to have imbibed something from the crowd and to have lost some of the composure of mind which he formerly possessed. Contact with the crowd is deadly, for everyone in it bestows on us some vice or evil although we are not conscious of it. The greater the crowd with which we mingle, the greater the pollution. He claims that there is nothing so contaminating to morals as the games at the amphitheatre. There vices come to us, alluring us in the form of pleasures. He claims that he always returns more greedy, more worldly, more cruel and inhuman because he has been in contact with men.

These vices of the multitude, no one is able to withstand. The display of luxury and avarice has an evil influence on men. Public customs being such as they are, men must either imitate them

(1) Ep. 15;6.
(2) Ep. 7;2.
(3) Ep. 7;2.
or hate them. The only cure for such conditions is for man to recede into himself, and associate only with those who can make them better and whom he in turn can aid.

Democritus and Epicurus were also of the opinion that the crowd had an evil influence on men. For the former is reputed to have given this answer when questioned about his opinion: Unus mihi pro populo est, et populus pro uno. and Epicurus wrote: haec ego non multis, sed tibi: satis enim magnum alter alteri theatrum sumus! Again Seneca urges men to avoid the multitude, avoid even the association of a few, or even of one.

According to Seneca's own confession he cares nothing at all about pleasing the people. For the things he knows, the people do not approve; and the things the people clamor for are not at all pleasing to him. It is impossible for one to please the people and be popular to whom virtue is pleasing. Popular favour is sought after by all kinds of methods, but to be liked, you must make yourself like the people. But to be popular with the people and to be ever before them in favour is of no consequence. But it is much more to the point, of what sort you seem to your self than to others. Stoic philosophy teaches one to please himself rather than others; that you take into consideration justice and not numbers; that you live without fear of Gods and men, and that you either conquer or

(1) Ep. 7;7 and 8.
(2) Ep. 7;11.
(3) Ep. 10;1.
(4) Ep. 29;11
put an end to evils; Seneca asserts that if ever he sees a person greeted with applause by the multitude, praised by men and women, he pities him for he knows what road he has traversed to win this favour.

Here again Seneca refers us to philosophy when he tells us that one should draw himself apart from the crowd, spurn the pleasure originating in the multitude and devote his live to philosophy.

(E) Education of His Times.

At Rome at this time the foundation of the teaching of the Schools was the Seven Liberal Arts. This included the Trivium and the Quadrivium somewhat as taught in later years. Seneca denounces the Liberal Arts on the ground that they are only beginning and really accomplish nothing. They may be useful if they prepare genius and do not hinder it. They are called Liberal Arts because they are worthy of a free man. But really there is only one liberal pursuit which makes one free. That is the sublime and lofty pursuit of wisdom. All others are mean and childish in comparison with philosophy, for the arts could not be good when the teachers of them are very base and profane.

(1) Ep. 7;12.
ista, mi Lucili, condenda in animum sunt, ut contemnas voluptatem ex plurium adsensione venientem.
(2) Ep. 88;1.
(3) Ep. 88;2.
Grammar teaches about the care of speech, about history and poetry, but in no way does it ward off fear from men or check their desires or restrain lust. Therefore it is inferior to philosophy.

Geometry teaches one to measure fields, surfaces, draw circles, squares, compute areas etc., but it does not teach one to divide his possession with his brother; nor does it teach one how to measure the human mind, either to tell how large it is or how small. Philosophy does this, therefore it excels geometry.

Music teaches one how he can make sounds harmonize; but it is much more practical to learn how one's entire life may be harmonious and not full of discord.

Astronomy glories in the knowledge of the heavenly bodies. The action of these bodies can be prevented by none; therefore a knowledge of these inevitable things is unnecessary. We never know whether or not we are going to see a tomorrow. Prepared for adversity we wait for favorable things.

Painters, sculptors and other artisans are excluded from those devoting themselves to the study of liberal arts, because they furnish pleasures to the mind. They attribute much to liberal arts but nothing at all to virtue.

Philosophy delves deeper into questions than does Mathematics.

(1) Ep. 88;3.
(2) Ep. 88;4, 5, 6, 7 and 8.
(3) Ep. 88;9.
(4) Ep. 88;14, 15, 16, and 17.
(5) Ep. 88;18, 19 and 20.
A Mathematician starts with an Hypothesis and a Philosopher proves the truth of that hypothesis e. g. quae causa in speculo imagines exprimat, sciet sapiens; illud tibi genometres potest dicere. quantum abesse debet corpus ab imagine et qualis forma speculi quales imagines reddat. Philosophy embodies an altruistic teaching which other arts do not consider. Though liberal arts benefit virtue, they do not teach it.

All these superfluous things should be discarded and the necessary things alone retained. To wish to know more than is sufficient, is a kind of intemperance. The teachers of these arts spend their time on these branches to their own detriment for these things are all superfluous. The Grammarians, for example, have devoted so much time to their art that they have come to the place where they know how to speak better than to live.

Philosophy teaches all that is necessary. Its teachings are legion and because so numerous they are very apt to become confusing.

Seneca denounces Rhetoric on the ground that it is a fallacious disputation which trains idle or foolish sharpness. Men are paying all attention to words when they should be thinking of their deeds and trying to make the two harmonize, for man is judged by his deeds, not words. Philosophy teaches one to act and how to make his words and deeds accord.

(1) Ep. 88;27.
(2) Ep. 88;35.
(3) Ep. 88;36.
(4) Ep. 88;42 sic effectum est, ut diligentius loqui scirent quam (vivere.
(5) Ep. 45;5.
He declares that the poets and the dialecticians are apt to allure people to their pursuits. But care must be exercised lest one think there is some great and secret good in them. He cannot understand why men busy themselves with problems of this sort which it is more beneficial to spurn than to solve.

Seneca asserts that a great corruption has come about in the eloquence of the time, and that it formerly flourished to a great degree but now shows a tendency toward certain vices. The same maxim holds true with the Romans as with the Greeks, "As men's life is, such is their speech." The kind of speech imitates public customs, and when they have fallen into luxury, then also does speech; the one is deeply affected by the other. The mind is moulded by externals and carried along by force; if this is true of the mind, how much more will it be true of eloquence which is centered in the mind. It is rooted in the mind, it obeys it and seeks its laws.

The mind is so completely undermined with vice that falsely constructed statements are made and so contrary to custom are they that they show the tendencies of the times to be depraved and strange.

(1) Religion.

In the midst of all these vices and luxuries Seneca becomes a great moral revivalist. The old Roman religion was falling away. Scepticism and an open contempt for the religion of their ancestors (1) Ep. 49; 5 and 6.

(2) Ep. 114; 1, 2, 3 and 7.
was creeping in among men. Stoicism was taking a firm hold upon men for there was a similar relationship between Stoic doctrine and Roman religion as between Stoic morals and Roman character. Seneca, as Cicero before him, considered the Gods as a superstition. "He is one of the few heathen moralists who warm moral teaching with the emotion of modern religion, and touch it with the sadness and the yearning which spring from a consciousness of man's infinite capacities and his actual degradation; one in whose eyes can be seen the "amor ulterioris ripae", in whose teaching there are searching precepts which go to the roots of conduct and are true for all ages of our race."

In his quiet moments of reasoning he confines himself strictly to Stoicism of the old type. But a new light shines for him; he sometimes touches a note of actual yearning; he has a conception of a "real God, a higher vision of a Creator, a pitiful and loving Guardian, the Giver of all good, the Power which draws us to Himself, who receives us at death, and in whom is our eternal beatitude." This is a new note in Stoicism and the hope just dawning transfigures the hard and cold nature of the old doctrine.

Seneca sees the evidence of the existence of this God all about him. He believes that a sacred spirit abides within us, the

(1) Dill - Roman Society p. 529; 30.
(2) Dill - Roman Society p. 531.
(3) Dill - Roman Society p. 304.
keeper and guard of our good and evil deeds. Just as he is treated by us, so he treats us. There is no good man without this God nor can any one rise above fortune unless aided by him. He has the welfare of man at heart and gives excellent and upright advice. If one doubts the existence of this God, let him look at the forests, and the sight of the trees towering aloft, with their branches overlapping and here and there obscuring the sky; the beauty of the shade, now dense, now far reaching will convince him of the existence of this God. Other phases of nature only point to the existence of this Supreme Being.

If you see a man undaunted by perils, unmoved by desires, happy in the midst of adversity, peaceful when encompassed by trials, then you are beholding God, or men in whom God dwells, for such minds cannot exist except where God dwells. As the rays of the sun fall upon the earth but in reality are there from whence they are sent, so a great and holy mind is sent down to this body, in order that we may come nearer knowing the Divine and that it may commune with us, but really clings to its origin. And there in remains, there it glows and shines in order to be in our presence and make us better. Who is so foolish as to wonder about things which can so easily be traced to their origin and to one being?

The Gods are friendly to man and reach out their hands to assist him as he struggles onward and upward. God comes down to man or rather within man, for no good mind exists except where a God dwells.

(1) Ep. 41 - Entire.
(2) Ep. 73;16.
God has made the mind of a wise man so strong that he can easily be compared with Jupiter whom in a way he surpasses. Jupiter sees the possessions of man and does not desire them because he could not use them; a man may see another's possessions, but care nothing for them because through the aid of philosophy he has freed himself from worldly desires.

It is impossible to live a secret life; for nothing can be hid from the Gods. If philosophy is adopted it will make a great difference between you and others. You will excell all mortals by much; but the Gods will not be much superior to you. It will make a vast difference in you; you will then possess the weakness of man but the security of a God.

Without doubt Seneca's philosophy reached its highest teaching in his attitude toward death. He ever strove to fortify himself against this. Perhaps he, more than other philosophers, felt the need of this preparation in view of the fact that Nero's disfavour was hovering above him like a menacing cloud. He asserts that he is able to enjoy life because he is prepared for death.

The trouble is, men die before they begin to live. They have not yet adopted the right principle of life before they are taken away.

(1) Ep. 73;14.
(2) Ep. 83;1.
(3) Ep. 53;11.
(4) Ep. 61;2.

paratus exire sum et ideo fruar vita, quia quam diu futurum hoc sit, non nimis pendeo.
non trepidabo ad extrema, iam prae paratus sum.
Death cannot be avoided, we were all born subject to this law of death. It befell our fathers, our mothers, our ancestors, in fact it has come to everyone who lived before us and must come to all who succeed us. One of the duties of life is to die.

If death is to be feared then we must fear constantly for it is uncertain when it will come upon us. Life then becomes a verti-

table servitude if the virtue of dying is absent.

The mind must be stayed and composed, to meet the inevitable. All affectation must be laid aside for not what you have said but what you have actually done will appear at that time, for as a story is judged not by its length, but by the way it is told, so life is judged not by years but by the way it has been lived.

Many men before us have composed their minds to meet death bravely. Rutilius, Metellus and Socrates are examples of remarkable fortitude. They met death bravely and even gladly.

The chain which holds us fast bound, namely the love of life, must be broken and we must make ourselves willing to leave this life when we are so ordered.

(1) Ep. 77;12.
(2) Ep. 77;19.
(3) Ep. 30;18.
(4) Ep. 77;15.
(6) Ep. 77;20.

nam vita, si moriendi virtus abest, servitus est.

una est catena, quae nos alligatos tenet, amor vitae.
There is nothing to fear after death for we shall return to the same state as before birth. Then we suffered no ills or torments and so we will not after death. A lantern which has been lit and then blown out is no worse off than before it was lit; so our lives are kindled and then extinguished; between these two events we have feeling, and experience many things. What came before us was death as well as what is to come after this life; so what is the difference whether we have never lived or are ceasing to live, since in each case we merely do not exist.

Then comes the question, shall a man await the natural end of life? There are may men who are tired of life and yet do not know how to die; and other men who desire death and seek it rather than life. Seneca in this place confesses that he does not know whether those who call in death to their relief or those who calmly and quietly await it furnish the best example to us.

At length as a Stoic he adopts their attitude toward suicide. "For the doctrine of suicide was the culminating point of Roman stoicism." It furnished for the Philosopher a refuge against extreme suffering or despair. It taught men to hope little, but to fear nothing. It divested death of all terror as soon as it became a remedy rather than a sentence.

(1) Ep. 54;4, and 5.
(2) Ep. 4;5.
(3) Ep. 30;12.
To Seneca death did not seem like a stone but like a harbour (1) to which all must come. Toward that harbour we all are borne; some reach it soon; others are retarded in their progress by sluggish winds or unfavorable gales. Man is fortunate when he comes there. A philosopher does not think how long his life will be but rather of what sort he will make it while he lives. It does not pertain to the question whether one lives a long or short life but whether at the end of that time he dies well or ill; for it is not when we die but how.

If one death is torture and one easy and simple, why not choose the latter? If one is permitted to choose the ship in which he will sail and the house he will inhabit, so he has the right to choose the means by which he will leave life and seek death. One has a right to act according to his desire in nothing more than the matter of death. It is man's privity to decide whether he prefers to leave life by means of the sword, the rope or poison creeping through his veins. One can go forth boldly and break the bonds of servitude which hold him in life.

Man should please others in his life, but he should choose (5) the death that best suits him. Eternal law has decreed nothing better than this, that man should have but one entrance into this world but many exits from it. Should one be compelled to endure

(1) Ep. 70;3.
(2) Ep. 70;3 and 4.
(3) Ep. 70;5 and 6.
(4) Ep. 70;11 and 12.
(5) Ep. 70;12.
the torture of disease, or the cruelty of man when he has the power to free himself from the torments that are making his life miserable?

For this reason one can complain of life - it forces no one to remain in it; one can put an end to it when ever he so desires. Man has a happy lot, for if he continues wretched it is his own fault.

If life is pleasing, let him live; but if not, then the way is open for him to return whence he came, for nothing hinders one from dying but the wish. Seneca closes this letter, full of Stoic teachings, by saying that it is most beautiful for one to inflict death upon himself.

It may be that Seneca is preparing himself for an ordeal of this sort, planning and strengthening his mind in order to escape the hand of Nero. If he was meditating death of this sort it was anticipated by the order of Nero by which he was forced to drink the fatal poison.

Seneca was fortified against the world by his philosophy. It was his guide, his goal, his cure for every ill.

(1) Ep. 70;15.
(2) Ep. 70;21.
(3) Ep. 70;28.

ut scias ad moriendum nihil aliud in mora esse quam velle.

at contra pulcherrimum mori rapto.
4. Conclusion.

Notwithstanding the allurements of the age, Seneca tore himself apart from the world and became pronounced against existing worldliness. As a reformer he takes a stand against the evil practices of his time. He is an exceptional figure. He displays an almost modern attitude in some of his views, in spite of the fact that Christianity and its softening and refining influence stands between these first century opinions and our own milder modern day theories.

He stood foremost in realizing that these evil practices were sapping the strength from the sinews of Roman stock. He was the "idol, the oracle of reforms, the favorite preacher of the more intelligent and humane disciples of nature and virtue." (1)

In his writings he laments the vices of the age and longs to raise the standard of morals about him. He is actuated by a spirit of reform, an eagerness to see souls converted. He and St. Paul were contemporaneous reformers; the one emphasized a pure life for the sake of virtue; the other promised something beyond this life; in addition to the satisfaction of a virtuous life here it looked beyond and described a hope which the philosopher never dared contemplate.

Seneca had a vast audience which listened to his sermons and we may believe that the soil was not altogether fruitless. He pronounced a doctrine very like Christianity; he strove for purity in life but did not take into account the compensation which awaits the Christian. (2)

(1) Merivale; 229.
(2) Merivale p. 231.
He was far sighted enough to see the injurious results of many of the practices of the state. Such evils were sure to prove disasterous to Roman Society. Though a native of Spain he had become a good Roman. He loved the city and its past, but he took an exceptional attitude toward his times and feared greatly for the future of the Empire. For he was convinced that states built on a foundation of luxury and avarice were tottering things and not at all substantial or enduring.

As an individual he showed great strength of character in being able to separate himself from the world and customs which everywhere prevailed; he who stood aloof from the crowd and did not become a participant in their pleasures was indeed an exceptional person. Though he condemns the vices and luxury of his time, we are led to think that for the most part he opposes them on the ground that they are hindrances to the pursuit of philosophy, rather than because he sees in them any great amount of harm.

We are indebted to him for information concerning the general depravity of his times which we get from no other source. And by no other Roman writer have philosophical views, such as Seneca holds, been expressed.

He was prominent in the state in many capacities; as a writer, a statesman, an advisor of the monarch, a philosopher and a moralist. In each position he won recognition but his preeminent reputation has been won through his teachings as a moralist. We have no way of estimating Seneca's influence upon his contemporaries, but we do know that his letters seem like powerful pleas for a reformed life.
History verifies his portrayal of Social life and furnishes to us bold statements of the enormities of the tyrant emperor at which Seneca only hints; in veiled terms he paints the genuine characteristics of that monster.

He was a man with an aim and toward this he worked, namely, the purging of Roman Society; and this he hoped to do through the medium of philosophy. This he longed to make the crowning glory of Roman life. By it he thought to regenerate the men of his times, restore pristine purity and infuse into the hearts of men a love of virtue for virtue's sake.

He himself had endeavored to find satisfaction in the pleasures of the world; but at the very sunset of life he learned that the pleasures which the world offered and which Society furnished to its members were only vain and that life presented greater possibilities and opportunities—the perfection of one's mind, the enthronement of virtue in one's life and the submission of one's entire being to philosophy, that most sublime of all pursuits.