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DOMINIKA BUDZANOWSKA-WEGLENDA

TO BE PRUDENT, THAT IS TO FORESEE: SENECA THE YOUNGER'S PHILOSOPHICAL THOUGHTS ON THE VIRTUE OF "PRUDENTIA"

André Comte-Sponville noted that prudence was one of the four cardinal virtues of ancient and medieval times, while today it is perhaps the most forgotten of these virtues:

> For modern-day thinkers, prudence falls more within the domain of psychology and calculation than within that of morality and duty. [...] The fact is that the word *prudence* is so burdened with history that it is inevitably subject of misunderstanding; moreover, it has all but disappeared from the contemporary moral dictionary, This does not mean, however, that we are no longer in the need of it.[1]

In ancient times it was analyzed, among others, by one of the most important Roman philosophers, Seneca, or Lucius Annaeus Seneca, who together with Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius form a triumvirate of Roman sages: all three of them—a slave, a wealthy man and a monarch—voice the same stoic philosophy, although in different ways.[2] It is worth adding, for the sake of accuracy, that Seneca was called the Younger (*Minor)*, and, although not so often, also the Philospher (*Philosophus*), probably to differentiate him from his father, Seneca the Elder (*Maior*), known as the Rhetorician (*Rhetor*).

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[1] A. Comte-Sponville, *A Small Treatise on the Great Virtues*, New York, Halt Paperbacks, 2002, 30-31.
[2] L. Joachimowicz, *Wstęp*, in Seneka, *Dialogi*, Warszawa 1989, 108.

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Seneca the Younger was a famous rhetorician, writer, philosopher, and at the same time an influential Roman politician of the first century, appreciated by his contemporaries and generations of Romans who came after him. There is no doubt that his statues and busts adorned, together with the statues and busts of Homer, Sophocles, Meander, Epicure, Virgil, Livy or Cicero, numerous libraries as well as public and private houses.[3] Some of his effigies still exist. One of them, a herm, together with a portrait of Socrates, is kept by Museo della Civilita Romana in Rome. Museo Nazionale in Naples has a bronze head from Villa dei Papiri in Herculanum, which is sometimes treated as a portrait of Seneca (or Aesop[4]).

The life of Seneca was full of twists and turns. With the flow of time, particularly when he became the guardian of Nero, and later his advisor, he was faced with difficult decisions and great moral dilemmas. Sometimes he could not deal with them in the spirit of a Stoic sage, and therefore the following opinion was formed: "Every man who has seen Seneca's bust in the archaeological museum in Naples, one of the most beautiful effigies of Antiquity, must undoubtedly ponder the difference between physiognomy and way of life. Indeed the identification of this effigy as Seneca remains uncertain."[5] However, quite a few of his literary works have been preserved, and it is mostly they that show us his life and character, but also his literary merits and philosophical teachings.[6] Although Seneca's Stoic stance during his life could be questioned, in his death he turned out to be a great and faithful representative of his school—it is commonly assumed that Seneca was a Stoic,[7] although not quite a pure one[8]: "he is, on the Roman ground, the main continuator of the direction given to the Stoic school by two leading representatives

[3] M. Nowicka, *Twarze antyku*, Warszawa 2000, 196.
[4] M. Ranieri Panetta, *Neron*, Warszawa 2001, 28.
[5] P. Vandenberg, *Neron*, Warszawa 2001, 64.
[6] Cf. L. Joachimowicz, op. cit., 21.
[7] Cf. B. Inwood, *Reading Seneca. Stoic Philosophy at Rome*, Oxford 2005, 1.
[8] Cf. J. Bocheński, *Zarys historii filozofii*, Kraków 1993, 72.

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and creators of its second, so-called middle phase of development, Panaetius and Posidonius, a direction which has been mellowed, of a very practical character, with links to the teachings of Plato and Aristotle, that is the eclectic one, and that was the form in which it became popular in Rome."[9]

It should be pointed out at the beginning that out of three areas of philosophy (physics, logic, ethics) Seneca was practically interested in ethics[10] because for him philosophy is a study of virtue (*studium virtutis*),[11] the law of life *(vitae lex)*.[12] Its only goal is to acquire the truth about things divine and human (*huius opus unum est de divinis humanisque verum invenire*),[13] which he also stresses at the beginning of *Naturales quaestiones*,, when he writes about the great importance of studies on the mysteries of nature and getting to know God, and the moral advantages being their result.[14] He sees the role of philosophy in practical terms. It is to teach deeds, not words. (*facere docet philosophia, non dicere*).[15] As becomes a Stoic, he devoted a lot of his attention to virtue (*virtus)* and its different variants, including four basic virtues: (*iustitia*) justice, (*fortitudo*)

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[9] L. Joachimowicz, op. cit., 97.

[10] K. Tuszyńska, *Droga do mądrości w ujęciu Seneki*, „Filomata" 303/1976, 165; on division of philosophy cf. *Ep.* 89. It should be remembered that there also exists Seneca's *Naturales quaestiones,* with his important judgement of limiting oneself to ethics only: *O quam contempta res est* homo, *nisi supra humana surrexit! Quamdiu cum affectibus conluctamur, quid magnifici facimus? Etiamsi superiores sumus, portenta vincimus. (...) Effugisti vitia animi (...): nihil adhuc consecutus es; multa effugisti, te nondum. Virtus enim ista, quam adfectamus, magnifica est, non quia per se beatum est malo caruisse, sed quia animum laxat ac praeparat ad cognitionem coelestium, dignumque ejficit, qui in consortium deorum veniat* (NQ I, praefatio 5-6*)*; cf. also J. Domański, *„Scholastyczne" i „humanistyczne" pojęcie filozofii, Kęty 2005, 49-50.*

[11] *Ep.* 89, 8.

[12] *Ep.* 94, 39.

[13] *Ep.* 90, 3.

[14] *NQ* 1-17.

[15] *Ep.* 20, 2.

bravery, (*temperantia*) temperance and (*prudentia*) prudence, known since Ambrose of Milan (fourth century) as the cardinal virtues.

This paper is devoted to one of these basic virtues, the virtue of prudence (*prudentia*). This virtue is the third basic one if we take into account the frequency of its occurrence in Seneca's philosophical deliberations. It appears 35 times in his works which have been preserved.[16]

The etymology of the name of this virtue, given already in ancient times, is interesting. The term *prudentia* comes from the verb *providere*, therefore it means foresight, forethought, prudence, preparation for something, and "therefore taking care of something.[17] As a contemporary French philosopher says: "A virtue of duration, of the uncertain future, of the propitious moment (the *kairos* of the Greeks), a virtue of patience and anticipation.[18] Romans translated the Greek word *φρόνησις* for *prudentia*. This term, as Comte-Sponville claims, was particularly "eagerly used by Aristotle and the Stoics. Aristotle explained prudence as an intellectual virtue: "It seems, then, to be characteristic of a practically wise person to be able to deliberate correctly on what is good and advantageous for himself, not partially (for example about what kinds of things further health or further strength) but about what kinds of things further living as a whole".[19] "It could be called good sense but in the service of good will".[20]

It is worth observing that Seneca himself defines this virtue with reference to the verb from which the Latin name derives: *facienda providere*, or to foresee what should be done. The connection

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[16] Statistical data quoted after *Lucius Annaeus Seneca. Opera philosophica. Index verborum. Listes de frequences, releves de grammaticaux*, ed. by L. Delatte, Et. Evrard S. Govaerts, J. Denooz, vol. II *P-Z,* Hildesheim-New York 1981, 586.

[17] Cf., for example, *Słownik łacińsko-polski*, ed. by M. Plezia, vol. IV, Warszawa 1974, 367.

[18] A. Comte-Sponville, op. cit., 34.

[19] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, transl. by C.D.C. Reeve, Indianopolis, Hackett Publishing Company, 2914, VI 5, 1140 a-b.

[20] A. Comte-Sponville, op. cit., 32.

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of the verb *providere* with the name of the virtue is also seen in the fragment about sages who ruled during the Golden Age, who were to foresee with their prudence that no one was in need of anything: *horum prudentia ne quid deesset suis providebat.*[21]

The virtue of *prudentia* appears in a similar meaning in the text *De clementia*, in the context of power, and more specifically in the context of the legislative power. So, Seneca refers to this virtue when he explains to Nero (to whom he addresses this text) that people more often commit these transgressions, for which they are punished more often, and he gives the example of the period when Nero's father, during his five-year-long reign, sewed into bags more people who had committed patricide[22] than over several previous centuries: this was the result of the passing laws against this gravest of crimes: *Praeterea videbis ea saepe committi, quae saepe vindicantur. Pater tuus plures intra quinquennium culleo insuit, quam omnibus saeculis insutos accepimus. Multo minus audebant liberi nefas ultimum admittere, quam diu sine lege crimen fuit.*[23] So the law, in a way, created people who committed patricide because the punishment showed the crime itself: *itaque parricidae cum lege coeperunt, et illis facinus poena monstravit.*[24] In this context Seneca praises the virtue of *prudentia*. He explains that men most prudent and most versed in the matters of nature preferred to avoid this crime, and did not speak about it, treating it as improbable and being beyond the reach of impertinence, than to point to the possibility of committing it by giving punishment for it: *Summa enim prudentia altissimi viri et rerum naturae peritissimi*

[21] *Ep.* 90, 5.

[22] This punishment had earlier been mentioned by Cicero, who regarded it as a wise punishment for patricide (as it deterred crime), invented by Romans. Cf. Cicero, *Pro Roscio Amerino* 10: *Quanto nostri maiores sapientius! qui cum intellegerent nihil esse tam sanctum quod non aliquando violaret audacia, supplicium in parricidas singulare excogitaverunt ut, quos natura ipsa retinere in officio non potuisset, ei magnitudine poenae a maleficio summo verentur. Insui voluerunt in culleum vivos atque ita in flumen deici*).

[23] *Cl.* I 23, 1.

[24] Ibidem.

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maluerunt velut incredibile scelus et ultra audaciam positum praeterire quam, dum vindicant, ostendere posse fieri.[25] The virtue of *prudentia* is therefore seen in this situation as foreseeing the results of legislating certain laws.

A very similar relationship of the virtue of prudence with the problem of legislating punishment for patricide can be found in one of the speeches of Cicero, in which Athens is recalled as *prudentissima civitas Atheniensium*, and Solon as *eius civitatis sapientissimus*.[26] The Athenian legislator, when asked why he did not give any punishment for patricide, was to answer that he was convinced that no-one would commit it. He was deemed to have acted rightly in not creating legislation in connection with a crime which had not been committed so far, because such legislation would not stop the crime, but would remind people about it: *Is cum interrogaretur cur nullum supplicium constituisset in eum qui parentem necasset, respondit se id neminem facturum putasse Sapienter fecisse dicitur, cum de eo nihil sanxerit quod antea commissum non erat, ne non tam prohibere quam admonere videretur.*[27]

A wise man (and we should remember this while analysing Seneca's work) takes care of the punishment. He does not forgive (*non ignoscet)*, as forgiveness means the pardoning of the just punishment (*Venia est poenae meritae remissio*), and a wise man does not neglect anything he should do, and therefore he will not neglect a punishment which is due to someone (*sapiens autem nihil facit, quod non debet, nihil praetermittit, quod debet; itaque poenam, quam exigere debet, non donat)*[28]. However, he can be guided by lenience, which judges in a free manner, and not according to the letter of the law, but according to justness and goodness. (*Clementia liberum arbitrium habet; non*

[25] 27 Ibidem.
[26] Cf. Cicero, *Pro Roscio Amerino* 10: *Prudentissima civitas Atheniensium, dum ea rerum potita est, fuisse traditur; eius porro civitatis sapientissimum Solonem dicunt fuisse, eum qui leges quibus hodie quoque utuntur scripserit.*
[27] Ibidem.
[28] *Cl.* II 7, 1.

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sub formula, sed ex aequo et bono iudicat).[29]That is why a wise man saves a man, acts as a councillor, and corrects: *parcet enim sapiens, consulet et corriget.*[30]

An example of a wise and lenient ruler is provided by the story of the trial of the son of Tarius, a trial in which August took part.[31] The trial, which was staged in the private home of Tarius, was about a futile attempt of patricide. August advised the father to give the most lenient of punishments (*mollissimum genus poenae*), that is to sentence the son to exile, to a place chosen by the father: *dixit relegandum, quo patri videretur.*[32] Seneca regarded such behaviour of a ruler as exemplary, calling him *as worthy of being called by fathers to a counsel: O dignum, quem in consilium patres advocarent!*[33]

The virtue of *prudentia* is therefore connected with correct counselling: in various situations: *prudentia suaserit.*[34] Ultimately, if someone can predict wise things, he can also offer good counsel (*consilium*). The virtue advises us to use the present time well, to take care of the future, to think and deliberate: *Virtus autem suadet praesentia bene conlocare, in futurum consulere, deliberare et intendere animum.*[35] While dealing with this remark about the present time, it is worth recalling a fragment from the dialogue *De brevitate vitae* in order to show that this virtue is not only about foresight, and therefore, in a way, about the future, but that it has important reference to the present moment. So, Seneca warns us not to live like people who boast that they are prudent, while in reality they act against prudence. Because in the desire to live better they plan their future life at a price to their present life. They set their plans for the distant future, while the greatest loss of life is putting it off for later: *Potestne quicquam stultius esse quam quorundam sensus, hominum eorum*

[29] *Cl.* II 7, 3.
[30] *Cl.* II 7, 2.
[31] *Cl.* I 15, 2-7.
[32] *Cl.* I 15, 6.
[33] *Cl.* I 16, 1.
[34] *Marc.* 12, 2.
[35] 37 *Ep.* 109, 15.

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dico qui prudentiam iactant? (...) *Ut melius possint vivere, impendio vitae vitam instruunt. Cogitationes suas in longum ordinant; maxima porro vitae iactura dilatio* est.[36]

Seneca then, straight away, explains that such thinking about the future takes away from a man every morning. Promises for the future tear away what is present, and expectations for future events, which destroy today, are the biggest problem in life: *illa primum quemque extrahit diem, illa eripit praesentia dum ulteriora promittit. Maximum vivendi impedimentum est exspectatio, quae pendet ex crastino, perdit hodiernum.*[37] In this way imprudent people in a way dispose of what is governed by fate (after all, anything in the future is uncertain), and they ignore what they have at their disposal: *Quod in manu fortunae positum est disponis, quod in tua, dimittis. Quo spectas? Quo te extendis? Omnia quae ventura sunt in incerto iacent.*[38] Therefore Seneca's advice is: *protinus vive.*[39] Therefore, to live prudently is to live in the present moment, to use well the time of one's life.

Each perfect, useful man, supports his counsel with prudence: *Proderit autem ille perfectus, si consilium communi prudentia iuverit.*[40] The same is true about a good ruler. His numerous people, centred around the soul of this man, are governed by his breath, are guided by his reason, so they would be destroyed under their own weight if they had no support in the counsel and wisdom of their ruler: *...haec immensa multitudo unius animae circumdata illius spiritu regitur, illius ratione flectitur pressura se ac fractura viribus suis, nisi consilio sustineretur.*[41] Princesses, kings, and rulers called by different names, are guardians and foundations of a state, and their subjects love them

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[36] *Br.* 9, 1.
[37] Ibidem.
[38] Ibidem.
[39] *Br.* 9, 1.
[40] *Ep.* 109, 15.
[41] *Cl.* I 3, 5.

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more than their own families, putting the common good higher than the individual one:

> Ideo principes regesque et quocumque alio nomine sunt tutores status publici non est mirum amari ultra privatas etiam necessitudines; nam si sanis hominibus publica privatis potiora sunt, sequitur, ut is quoque carior sit, in quem se res publica convertit.[42]

This rule is also true for Roman emperors. Because Caesars have become a part of the state to the extent that they cannot be separated from their common fate, since they need strength and the state needs the head: *Olim enim ita se induit rei publicae Caesar, ut seduci alterum non posset sine utriusque pernicie; nam et illi viribus opus est et huic capite.*[43]

The virtue of *prudentia* (as well as all other virtues) can, of course, be attributed only to a man, and not to any other creature. Only a man has the ability of foresight, care and thinking, as is the case with defects: *Nulli nisi homini concessa prudentia est, providentia diligentia cogitatio, nec tantum virtutibus humanis animalia sed etiam vitiis prohibita sunt*[44]. Because only a man has reason (*ratio*), while animals have only drives *(impetus habent ferae)*.[45] It does not mean, however, that all people possess the virtue of prudence. After all, any virtue should be acquired, learnt. Seneca writes about the lack of prudence, among others, in his dialogue "De ira", where he explains the senselessness of anger directed at objects, but also at children and at people who, because of the lack of prudence, are similar to children: *Atqui ut his irasci stultum est, ita pueris et non multum a puerorum prudentia distantibus.*[46] So, children and some adults have no prudence, and therefore all of their transgressions are

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[42] *Cl.* I 4, 3.
[43] Ibidem.
[44] *Ira* I 3, 1.
[45] *Ira* I 3, 4.
[46] *Ira* II 26, 6.

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acquitted by a just judge, exactly because of this lack: *omnia enim ista peccata apud aequum iudicem pro innocentia habent inprudentiam.*[47]

It happens, however, that someone young possesses this virtue in the manner as if s/he were old (*senilis in iuvene prudentia48*). Seneca writes about it when he consoles Marcia, saying that her wise son should have died (*tu, Marcia,* (...) *diu tibi putabas illum sospitem posse contingere?*), because everything which has reached the top is close to the end (*Quicquid ad summum pervenit, ab exitu prope est*[49]). And the thing about an exquisite mind is that the earlier it shines, the shorter it lives (*ingenia quo inlustriora, breviora sunt.*[50])

The feature of prudence is coming to terms with the necessity of death, the imminence of which, after all, is nothing new to a man, whose life is nothing else but a road towards death (*quid enim est novi hominem mori, cuius tota vita nihil aliud quam ad mortem iter est*[51] . Each man, who is born to life, is also destined for death *(Omnes huic rei tollimur; quisquis ad vitam editur, ad mortem destinatur*[52]). An example of such a prudent attitude is a father who knows, at the moment of his son's birth, that his child will die (*'Ego cum genui, tum moriturum scivi'),* and, which testifies to his prudence, (*...adiecit rem maioris et prudentiae et animi*[53]), he accepts his son exactly on these terms (*'et huic rei sustuli'*)..[54]

Rutilia is another model of prudence (presented by Seneca to Helvia, his mother), who after the loss of his beloved son, Cotta, did not succumb to unnecessary and unreasonable mourning: *...ostendit, in amisso prudentiam; nam* (...) *nihil in tristitia supervacua stultaque detinuit.*[55] Another woman who showed prudence in the face of death

[47] Ibidem.
[48] *Marc.* 23, 3.
[49] Ibidem.
[50] *Marc.* 23, 4.
[51] *Pol.* 11, 2.
[52] *Pol.* 11, 3.
[53] Ibidem.
[54] *Pol.* 11, 2-3.
[55] 57 *Helv.* 16, 1.

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is Seneca's aunt, the sister of Helvia. The example of prudence of this perfect woman (Seneca himself was the witness of it) is to prevent Helvia from suffering from sadness, which is not going to help her in any way: *Sed si prudentiam perfectissimae feminae novi, non patietur te nihil profuturo maerore consumi et exemplum tibi suum, cuius ego etiam spectator fui, narrabit.*[56] So, Helvia's sister, having lost her beloved husband in a sea gale, when they were sailing together, suffered sadness and fear, and after the gale subsided she took the body of her husband from the ship: *Carissimum virum amiserat, avunculum nostrum (...) in ipsa quidem navigatione; tulit tamen eodem tempore et luctum et metum evictisque tempestatibus corpus eius naufraga evexit.*[57] She did not succumb to the fear of death when she was looking at the damaged ship, but holding her husband's body she was trying to save her life and the body of her husband: *non metus mortis iam exarmata nave naufragium suum spectantem deterruit quominus exanimi viro haerens non quaereret quemadmodum inde exiret sed quemadmodum efferret.*[58] Seneca encourages his mother to emulate her sister in this display of bravery and in overcoming sorrow, so that no one will ever think that she is suffering because of her son's fate: *Huic parem virtutem exhibeas oportet et animum a luctu recipias et id agas ne quis te putet partus tui paenitere.*[59]

Seneca, writing about imperturbability of a sage, discernible also on the face, claims that a sage never succumbs to sadness (although, against some Stoic philosophers, claiming that a sage never succumbs to sadness[60], Seneca thinks that a sage is to be characterized not by *dura* but by *fortis prudentia*, as the mind does not allow a man to be totally free from suffering as non-existing. It is therefore enough if only what is superfluous is removed from pain: *Satis praestiterit ratio,*

[56] *Helv.* 19, 4.
[57] Ibidem.
[58] *Helv.* 19, 7.
[59] Ibidem.
[60] Cf. *Pol.* 18, 5: *...negent doliturum esse sapientem*; cf, also, Diogenes Laërtius, *Vitae philosophorum* VII 118.

si id unum ex dolore, quod et superest et abundat, exciderit: ut quidem nullum omnino esse eum patiatur[61]): *eandem semper faciem servabit, placidam, inconcussam, quod facere non posset, si tristitiam reciperet.*[62] Because he always foresees and has a good counsel at hand (*sapiens et providet et in expedito consilium habet*[63]), similar to healthy, clear water which flows from an undisturbed source.[64] It should be mentioned that the virtue, according to Seneca, is a living creature. The proof for it is its influence on the way a man looks. The virtue of *fortitudo* gives liveliness to a man's eyes, while *prudentia* gives tension, focus: *An non vides quantum oculis det vigorem fortitudo? quantam intentionem prudentia?* [65] A sage has the ability to understand situations, coming up with solutions, avoiding danger, taking the right decisions.[66] As Comte-Sponville writes about the virtue of prudence: "The Stoics considered prudence a science ('the science of what to do and what not to do', they said)".[67]

A fragment from Seneca's letter about coping with torture in a brave manner could also be recollected. During this suffering it is not only bravery which is revealed but also all other virtues, including prudence, which offers good counsel and convinces us that what is unavoidable should be borne with the utmost bravery: *illic est prudentia, sine qua nullum initur consilium, quae suadet quod effugere non possis quam fortissime ferre.*[68] However, the lack of the virtue of *prudentia* is testified if someone worries about different disagreeable events in life, for which Seneca scolds Lucilius (whose slaves had run away when he had been busy with his work), reminding him that trifles should not take away prudence, incisiveness in dealing

[61] Cf. *Pol* 18, 5-6.
[62] *Cl.* II 5, 5.
[63] *Cl.* II 6, 1.
[64] Cf. ibidem: *numquam autem liquidum sincerumque ex turbido venit.*
[65] 67 *Ep.* 106, 1.
[66] Cf. ibidem: *Tristitia inhabilis est ad dispiciendas res, utilia excogitanda, periculosa vitanda, aequa aestimanda.*
[67] A. Comte-Sponville, op. cit., 32.
[68] *Ep.* 67, 10.

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with different matters, and grandeur: *Ubi illa prudentia tua? ubi in dispiciendis rebus subtilitas? ubi magnitudo? Tam pusilla <te res> tangit? Servi occupationes tuas occasionem fugae putaverunt*[69]. Such adversities are not unusual or surprising; worrying about them is funny, particularly because life is not easy: *Nihil horum insolitum, nihil inexpectatum est; offendi rebus istis tam ridiculum est* (...). *Non est delicata res vivere.*[70]

Seneca's remarks about insult (*contumelia*) have a similar resonance. A sage cannot feel insulted. Because insult can be felt only by a despicable soul, self-centred, irritable to each insulting word or deed: *Hunc adfectum movet humilitas animi contrahentis se ob dictum factum inhonorificumj.*[71] Seneca gives the following examples of complaints about insult: complaining about closing a door in front of one (although it has been opened in front of other people), the deprecating turning away of a head or mocking someone during a conversation, sitting at an end of a table, and not in the middle.[72] Seneca defines complaints about such insults as the grievances of ailing souls (*querellae nausiantis animi*), that is people almost too delicate and happy (*fere delicati et felices*), and not people who have been burdened with real problems (*peiora*)[73]. Seneca believes that it is an excess of idleness which weakens characters and makes them effeminate, while the lack of real grievances wakes in them these exaggerated complaints about trifles, while most of these misunderstandings are the result of an improper understanding of situations: *Nimio otio ingenia natura infirma et muliebria et inopia verae iniuriae lascivientia his commoventur, quorum pars maior constat vitio interpretantis.*[74]

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[69] *Ep.* 107, 1.

[70] *Ep.* 101, 2.

[71] *CS* 10, 2

[72] Cf. *CS* 10, 2: *'ille me hodie non admisit, cum alios admitteret', et 'sermonem meum aut superbe aversatus est autpalam risit', et 'non in medio me lecto sed in imo conlocavit'*..

[73] *CS* 20, 2.

[74] *CS* 10, 3.

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Further explanations show that a man who worries about insult is not prudent. He does not have prudence, nor faith in his worth. He feels disdained, and such suffering in some way belittles the soul, which is so badgered and lowered: *Itaque nec prudentiae quicquam in se esse nec fiduciae ostendit qui contumelia adficitur; non dubie enim contemptum se iudicat, et hic morsus non sine quadam humilitate animi evenit supprimentis se ac descendentis*[75]. While a sage cannot be disdained, because he knows his greatness and does not allow anybody to treat him in such a way. He does not have to overcome such adversities, or annoyances, because he is not affected by them at all: *Sapiens autem a nullo contemnitur, magnitudinem suam novit nullique tantum de se licere renuntiat sibi et omnis has, quas non miserias animorum sed molestias dixerim, non vincit sed ne sentit quidem*[76]. He disregards such weak blows, ignores them, or considers them worthy of laughter, and he uses his strength to deal with heavy blows: *haec vero minora ne sentit quidem nec adversus ea solita illa virtute utitur dura tolerandi, sed aut non adnotat aut digna risu putat.*[77]

In Seneca's philosophical views on the virtues, they often go together. Such is also the case with *prudentia*. In one of the letters he connects this virtue with another cardinal virtue, of proper measure, that is with the virtue of *temperamentia*. Seneca, while describing men's attitudes to material goods, focuses on their evanescence (*fugacissima bona*[78]). He claims that not many people give them up, while the majority fall and are overburdened by them (although earlier these goods somehow differentiated them and placed them above others): *Paucis deponere felicitatem molliter licuit: ceteri cum iis inter quae eminuere labuntur, et illos degravant ipsa quae extulerant.*[79] Seneca explains that such a situation is safeguarded by the virtue of *prudentia*. Prudence and frugality give moderation to people, so

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[75] Ibidem.
[76] Ibidem.
[77] *CS* 10, 4.
[78] *Ep.* 74, 18.
[79] Ibidem.

that their affluence will not be destroyed by recklessness, because reason is necessary for moderate things to last for a while, reason which teaches proper measure: *Ideo adhibebitur prudentia, quae modum illis ac parsimoniam imponat, quoniam quidem licentia opes suas praecipitat atque urget, nec umquam immodica durarunt nisi illa moderatrix ratio compescuit.*[80] A sage himself does not need luxuries; his virtues (including prudence) will fit even in the small cottage (*humile tugurium*) of an exile.[81]

Prudence can also be helpful in overcoming fear: *Hic prudentia prosit, hic robore animi evidentem quoque metum respue.*[82] Earlier, Seneca explained to Lucilius that his grievances could be imagined or real (*...vana sint an vera quibus angor*), as we may be worried about events present and future, or by both (*aut praesentibus torquemur aut futuris aut utrisque*[83]). It is easy to decide about present events, because it is enough for a man to have a free and healthy body and not be worried about sustaining injustice: *De praesen- tibus facile iudicium est: si corpus tuum liberum et sanum est, nec ullus ex iniuria dolor est.*[84] When it comes to future events, what matters is that they do not cause trouble today, and there is no evidence that calamity will really happen, *videbimus quid futurum sit: hodie nihil negotii habet.* (...) *Primum dispice an certa argumenta sint venturi mali.*[85] So prudence helps a man not to bother himself with assumptions being the result of rumours which have negative effects in social life (they cause wars), and even more so in the private life of individuals: *plerumque enim suspicionibus laboramus, et illudit nobis illa quae conficere bellum solet fama, multo autem magis singulos conficit.*[86]

A man is keen to follow some opinion (cito accedimus opinioni), usually he does not check what he is afraid of, does not try to shake

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[80] *Ep.* 74, 19.
[81] *Helv.* 9, 3.
[82] *Ep.* 13, 12.
[83] *Ep.* 13, 7.
[84] Ibidem,
[85] *Helv.* 9, 3.
[86] *Ep.* 13, 7-8.

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off fear (non coarguimus illa quae nos in metum adducunt nec excutimus),[87] and he is more worried by empty rumours than true news with its own measure (magis vana perturbant; vera enim modum suum habent[88]). Seneca is extremely surprised by this (Nescio quomodo...). He explains that the worst are those fears as they are crazy alarms, devoid of reason (Nulli itaque tam perniciosi, tam inrevocabiles quam lymphatici metus sunt; ceteri enim sine ratione, hi sine mente sunt)..[89] Subsequently, he calls for a careful analysis of future events, even very probable ones, and advises not to treat them as certain, because many calamities come unexpectedly while many expected ones never happen, and moreover there is no point in running and meeting future pains, which will be annoying enough when they come. It is better to count on better events to come (after all, because of different circumstances, dangers which are very imminent cease or move to someone else, calamities are essentially timid: Multa intervenient quibus vicinum periculum vel prope admotum aut subsistat aut desinat aut in alienum caput transept (...). Habet etiam mala fortuna levitatem[90]):

> Inquiramus itaque in rem diligenter. Verisimile est aliquid futurum mali: non statim verum est. Quam multa non exspectata venerunt! quam multa exspectata nusquam comparuerunt! Etiam si futurum est, quid iuvat dolori suo occurrere? satis cito dolebis cum venerit: interim tibi meliora promitte. (...) Fortasse erit, fortasse non erit: interim non est; meliora propone.[91]

Seneca also points out that there are fears created by the mind without any ominous signs:

> Nonnumquam, nullis apparentibus signis quae mali aliquid praenuntient, animus sibi falsas imagines fingit: aut verbum aliquod

[87] Ibidem.
[88] *Ep.* 13, 9.
[89] Ibidem,
[90] 3, 11.
[91] Cf. *Ep.* 13, 10-11.

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> du- biae significationis detorquet in peius aut maiorem sibi offensam proponit alicuius quam est, et cogitat non quam iratus ille sit, sed quantum liceat irato.[92]

Seneca claims that a man can explain to himself for the worse words of uncertain meaning, may exaggerate someone's grudge and does not consider how angry someone has become, but how much this angry person can afford to do. A man, however, should be guided by reason, and in situations of fear the virtue of *prudenitia* is indispensable, and also, as it seems, the virtue of bravery. *Nemo enim resistit sibi, cum coepit impelli, nec timorem suum redigit ad verum* (...). *Damus nos aurae ferendos; expavescimus dubia pro certis*[93]. Seneca calls on us to follow nature, which means to make one's virtue bigger and grander. (*Non in diversum te a natura tua ducimus: natus es ad ista quae dicimus; eo magis bonum tuum auge et exorna*[94]). Future events should not be feared *(quidporro, si veniet?),* problems (if they appear) should be tackled, and attempts should be made to overcome them (*videbimus uter vincat*), particularly because they may appear for the good of a man, bringing him, for instance, glorious death (*fortasse pro me venit, et mors ista vitam honestabit*), which befell Socrates or Cato (*Cicuta magnum Socratem fecit. Catoni gladium assertorem libertatis extorque: magnam partem detraxeris gloriae*).[95]

It is also worth recalling another letter, in which he explains to Lucilius Stoic theses, including the ones concerning prudence: *Qui prudens est et temperans est; qui temperans est, et constans; qui constans est inperturbatus est; qui inperturbatus est sine tristitia est; qui sine tristitia est beatus est; ergo prudens beatus est, et prudentia ad beatam vitam satis est*.[96] First, he invalidates accusations put forward by some peripatetics that this thesis should be understood in a milder form. They tend to argue that there are no people who are

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[92] *Ep.* 13, 12.
[93] *Ep.* 13, 13.
[94] *Ep.* 13, 15.
[95] *Ep.* 13, 14.
[96] *Ep.* 85, 2.

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never afraid and are never sad, and that there are only people who only partly and only sometimes succumb to sadness or fear:

> Huic collectioni hoc modo Peripatetici quidam respondent, ut inperturbatum et constantem et sine tristitia sic interpretentur tamquam inperturbatus dicatur qui raro perturbatur et modice, non qui numquam. Item sine tristitia eum dici aiunt qui non est obnoxius tristitiae nec frequens nimiusve in hoc vitio[97].

They think, for example, that man's total freedom from sadness would be against nature, because even a sage is afflicted by worries (although he does not give in to them), and therefore those peripatetics do not remove passions, but only gauge them: *illud enim humanam naturam negare, alicuius animum inmunem esse tristitia; sapientem non vinci maerore, ceterum tangi; et cetera in hunc modum sectae suae respondentia. Non his tollunt adfectus sed temperant,*[98] Seneca believes that such deliberations are false (*Falsum est*[99]) because they lower the quality of a sage, by the assumption that he is braver only than the weakest ones, more joyful only than the saddest ones, more abstemious only than the unbridled ones: *Quantulum autem sapienti damus, si inbecillissimis fortior est et maestissimis laetior et effrenatissimis moderatior et humillimis maior!*[100] Seneca thinks that in the case of a good man the goal is not alleviation of drawbacks, but getting rid of them altogether, because if they remain even to some small degree, they will grow with time and will be obstacles: *Non enim deminutionem malorum in bono viro intellego sed vacationem; nulla debent esse, non parva; nam si ulla sunt, crescent et interim inpedient.*[101] What is evil never honestly becomes mellow: *Numquam bona fide vitia mansuescunt.*[102].

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[97] *Ep.* 85, 3.
[98] Ibidem.
[99] *Ep.* 85, 5.
[100] *Ep.* 85, 4.
[101] *Ep.* 85, 5.
[102] *Ep.* 85, 8.

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Seneca also explains that it is difficult for reason to cope even with very slight predilections to evil, and that it will ultimately be swept along by them as if by an unbridled mountain stream, even more so because there exist so many of these predilections: *Si das aliquos adfectus sapienti, inpar illis erit ratio et velut torrente quodam auferetur, praesertim cum illi non unum adfectum des cum quo conluctetur sed omnis.*[103] Because all these predilections have more strength than the one which is fully grown up: *Plus potest quamvis mediocrium turba quam posset unius magni violentia.* (...) *Melius cum illo ageretur qui unum vitium integrum haberet quam cum eo qui leviora quidem, sed omnia.*[104] Moreover, this gauging of effects is wrong and negative, because it is easier to stop passions which are in the budding stage than to cope with their fierce attack later: *Facilius est enim initia illorum prohibere quam impetum regere. Falsa est itaque ista mediocritas et inutilis,*[105], particularly because calamitous things never keep their measures: *numquam perniciosa servant modum.*[106] After these explanations[107] Seneca once again refers to the last part of the stoical thesis: *ergo prudens beatus est, et prudentia ad beatam vitam satis est*[108], explaining that (as becomes a Stoic) virtue (including prudence) is the only good, and it is enough for a happy life.[109] Anyway, the virtue is the same, it does not change its size, and therefore, regardless of all things, it preserves in itself perfect prudence (*exacta prudentia*).[110]

The virtue of *prudentia* appears in Seneca's writings in different contexts. One of them is slavery (today, so difficult to comprehend by us). It should be remembered that slavery in the Mediterranean basin

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103 *Ep.* 85, 6.
104 *Ep.* 85, 6-7.
105 *Ep.* 85, 9.
106 *Ep.* 85, 12.
107 They cover the fragment of *Ep.* 85, 3-16.
108 *Ep.* 85, 2.
109 *Ep.* 85, 17-23.
110 *Ep.* 74, 29.

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had existed long before Seneca's times.[111] It was commonly known and approved of. Even Christians at first did not reject slavery, probably because it was so strongly accepted in the social structure of both the Semitic tribes and in the Greco-Roman world that practically no-one questioned this state of affairs, even slaves or emancipated slaves.[112]

Let us briefly recall that in ancient Greece full freedom was granted only to a citizen of a polis. He had the right and the duty to participate in the matters of his polis, and to decide about its future. All others had limited freedom. Greece could not conceive of life without slaves.[113] The first slaves were usually prisoners of war (we meet them as early as in Homer[114]). They performed different tasks: they worked in agriculture, in artisan workshops, in mines and quarries, in the houses of their owners, and sometimes they became civil

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[111] It seems that slavery is connected with the sedentary model of life, because it was rare with nomadic people (cf. I. Bieżuńska-Małowist, *Część I — Starożytność*, in I. Bieżuńska-Małowist, M. Małowist, *Niewolnictwo*, Warszawa 1987, 28).

[112] Cf. *Letter to the Romans*16, 24, *Letter to the Philippians* 4, 22, *1 Letter to the Corinthians*7, 21-22, *Letter to the Colossians*3, 22-4, 1, *1 Letter to Tymotheus* 6, 1-2, *Letter to the Ephesians* 6, 5-9, 1P 2, 18-21; Ignatius of Antioch, *Letter to Polycarp*, 4, Irenaeus, *Adversus haereses* IV 21, 3; Tertullian, *De corona* 13.

[113] It was believed that inhabitants of Chios in the sixth century B.C. started buying slaves from outside Greece. However, little is known about the beginnings of slavery. (I. Bieżuńska-Małowist, M. Małowist, *Niewolnictwo*, 28).

[114] Cf. Homer, *The Oddysey* XVII 322-323. Later, at the end of the fifth century B.C., at the end of the Peloponnesian wars, there were cases of towns which were stormed to have their citizens sold into slavery, which became a rule in the middle of the fourth century B.C. in the times of Philip II of Macedon's War. His son, Alexander the Great, may serve as an example here. Having stormed Thebes, he sold 30 thousand of its inhabitants. You could also become a slave for debts (seventh-sixth century B.C.). The high point in the demand for slaves in Greece was in the fifth and fourth centuries B.C. In the fourth and third centuries pirates were more active in this respect. The key areas supplying slave were Syria, Phrygia, Thracia, where self-selling and selling of children were practised. Southern Syria and Palestine supplied slaves both in Hellenistic and Roman periods. (I. Bieżuńska-Małowist, M. Małowist, *Niewolnictwo*, 32-33.

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servants.[115] They lived in very different conditions, which depended on their jobs, resourcefulness, skills, and on the position and character of their owners. It should be remembered that slaves were expensive to buy, and that owners wanted to keep up their slaves' ability to work. Besides, there existed the possibility of emancipation for slaves, probably as early as in the archaic period,[116] but emancipation became common only later in the classical period.

The situation of slaves in Rome was similar. They became important in the third century B.C. Here, as well, the first slaves were prisoners of war, or children sold by their fathers, There existed slavery for debts, and the market for slaves was also supported by pirates.[117] Slaves in Rome did similar jobs as the ones in Greece: they worked on farms, in private houses, with craftsmen, doing public works, and in mines.[118] Educated slaves sometimes became administrators of their owners' fortunes, such as Tiro, who was Cicero's secretary. In the first century there also existed the considerable group of Caesars' slaves (*familia Caesaris*), who provided services at Caesars' courts, and constituted a considerable part of the imperial administration, often holding high and responsible positions. In the Imperial Period the situation of slaves started to improve, and the outlawry of owners was curbed.[119] Wells points out that the patron-clients relationship was still valid

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[115] PRZYPIS BEZ TREŚCI!!!

[116] Cf. Homer, *The Odyssey* XIV 61-67; XXI 213-216. The law treated a slave sometimes as a man, and sometimes as an object. A slave could be sold, given, given in will, pawned, or directed to any kind of work. The law in Attica practically did not protect him from his owner's brutality (he could only look for safety under the protection of deities), although it protected him from third parties. The court evidence of a slave was valid if it was given under torture. An injustice done to him was treated leniently, while his crimes were treated more severely than in the case of a free man. (cf. I. Bieżuńska-Małowist, M. Małowist, *Niewolnictwo*, 145-159).

[117] The slave trade became intensive and international at least from the fifth century B.C. to the late Imperial Period. The centre of the slave trade for Italy was first the Island of Rhodes, then the Island of Delos, where the market for slaves had the capacity of ten thousand people. (cf. ibidem, 45-57).

[118] Cf. ibidem, 63-87.

[119] Cf. ibidem, 156-159.

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socially. "To be attended by many clients was a status symbol, and by turning slaves into freedmen one increased the number of one's clients".[120] Wells also reminds us about situations when emancipated slaves were richer than their previous owners,[121] and about rebellions of slaves against their lords.[122]

In the Imperial Period in Rome many craftsmen had slave backgrounds. Slaves who later became emancipated slaves learnt their trades while serving in large households or in their owners' manufactories. There were very many different trades in such enterprises, and a status hierarchy,[123] with a reeve (*dispensator)* at the top, often with his own slaves. The rest of the servants were busy letting guests in (or not letting them in) and entertaining them. They serviced private rooms, and personal servants looked after clothes. They included barbers, masseurs, butlers, heralds, secretaries, book-keepers, and some slaves were artisans (carpenters, stone masons, plumbers, glaziers, while some of the Emperor's family had goldsmiths and jewellers). Others were librarians, archivists, teachers or doctors. Of course, there were also slaves working in agriculture. It should also be remembered that the majority of gladiators in Rome and elsewhere were also slaves.

It is no wonder then that the theme of slavery and slaves is present in Seneca's works, for example in *De clementia.* According

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[120] C. Wells, *The Roman Empire*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1995, 89.

[121] He refers to Callistus, the emancipated slave (cf. also M. Cary, H. H. Scullard, *Dzieje Rzymu. Od czasów najdawniejszych do Konstantyna*, vol. II, Warszawa 1992, 1). Seneca also wrote about him and his evil owner. After emancipation Callistus became wealthier than his ex-owner. *Stare ante limen Callisti domi num suum vidi et eum qui illi impegerat titulum, qui inter reicula manicipia produxerat, aliis intrantibus excludi. Rettulit illi gratiam servus ille in primam decuriam coniectus, in qua vocem praeco experitur: et ipse illum invicem apologavit, et ipse non iudicavit domo sua dignum. Dominus Callistum vendidit: sed domino quam multa Callistus* (*Ep*. 47, 9).

[122] C. Wells, op. cit., 89.

[123] Ibidem, 197. "The Senator Pedanius Secundus in Nero's time is alleged to have had a staff of 400 people in his town house" (ibidem). "Nearly eighty different job-titles are attested overall" (ibidem).

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to Seneca, slaves in their humanity were equal to other men. It was quite a revolutionary concept for a citizen and a minister of state who used slave's work. "Slaves are also people—forsooth, this was a provocative statement in the time when there still existed a distinction between people and slaves."[124] In *De clementia* Seneca praises mild and moderate handling of slaves, reminding us that also in the case of a slave one should consider not how much a slave can suffer without retaliation, but how much man is allowed by laws and good nature, which demands the forgiveness even prisoners of war and bought slaves: *Servis imperare moderate laus est. Et in mancipio cogitandum est, non quantum illud impune possit pati, sed quantum tibi permittat aequi bonique natura, quae parcere etiam captivis et pretio paratis iubet.*.[125] Of course, Seneca stresses straight away that the demands of nature in the case of free people, born in nobility, are even greater. A ruler should not treat them as slaves, but as charges, who, although lower in dignity than a ruler, are not given to him as slaves: *Quanto iustius iubet hominibus liberis, ingenuis, honestis non ut mancipiis abuti sed ut his, quos gradu antecedas quorumque tibi non servitus tradita sit, sed tutela.*[126]

Seneca, while addressing Nero, recollects that slaves have the right to look for refuge, asylum near the Emperor's statues (*Servis ad statuam licet confugere*[127]). Finally, he states that although everything is allowed with slaves, there exists something which is forbidden by natural law common to all living creatures: *cum in servum omnia liceant, est aliquid, quod in hominem licere commune ius animantium vetet.*[128] Therefore, it can be assumed that a ruler and a slave have the same nature and that they are equal. Seneca recalls the case of the cruel Vedius Pollion, hated by his slaves, for feeding morays with the human blood of those who had been guilty even of the slightest

[124] P. Vandenberg, op. cit., 67.
[125] *Cl.* I 18, 1.
[126] Ibidem.
[127] *Cl.* I 18, 2.
[128] Ibidem.

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infringements; they were thrown into a pond full of these bloodthirsty creatures: *Quis non Vedium Pollionem peius oderat quam servi sui, quod muraenas sanguine humano saginabat et eos, qui se aliquid offenderant, in vivarium, quid aliud quam serpentium, abici iubebat?*[129] Seneca claims that this man deserved thousands of deaths, regardless of whether he threw slaves in to feed morays in order to eat them later, or if he simply bred morays in this way (*O hominem mille mortibus dignum, sive devorandos servos obiciebat muraenis, quas esurus erat, sive in hoc tantum illas alebat, ut sic alert*[130]). He writes in *De clementia* that cruel slave owners are reproached by all in the city (*tota civitate commonstrantur*), and that they are hated and detested (*invisique et detestabiles sunt*).[131]

Alongside his remarks about slavery, we can find Seneca's statements about the virtue of *prudentia*. So, he is glad that Lucilius is on friendly terms with his slaves: *Libenter ex iis qui a te veniunt cognovi familiariter te cum servis tuis vivere: hoc prudentiam tuam, hoc eruditionem decet.*[132] Such behaviour becomes Lucilius' prudence and his education. Because slaves for Seneca are not only slaves, but first of all people (*homines*), regular companions (*contubernales*), humble friends (*humiles amici*), and, finally, yoke-fellows in bondage, because both masters and slaves are ruled by fate in the same way (*tantundem in utrosque licere fortunae.*[133]). Slaves were begotten from the same seeds as free people, they breathe the same air, and they live and die in the same way: *Vis tu cogitare istum quem servum tuum vocas ex isdem seminibus ortum eodem frui caelo, aeque spirare, aeque vivere, aeque mori!*[134]

Treating slaves not as people but as working animals: (*...ne tamquam hominibus quidem sed tamquam iumentis abutimur)* is

[129] Ibidem.
[130] Ibidem,
[131] *Cl.* I 18, 3.
[132] *Ep.* 47, 1.
[133] Ibidem.
[134] *Ep.* 47, 10.

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described by Seneca as cruel and inhuman (*crudelia, inhumana*[135]). He regrets that slave owners are haughty, cruel and disparaging to their servants (*superbissimi, crudelissimi, contumeliosissimi*[136]). He regrets corporal punishments, and praises Lucilius for only verbal punishment, as Seneca believes that flogging is suitable not for people but for mute creatures: *Rectissime ergo facere te iudico quod timeri a servis tuis non vis, quod verborum castigatione uteris: verberibus muta admonentur.*[137] He warns about the changeability of fate; so a slave may be emancipated and sit with free people, while someone who was free might become a slave: *tam tu illum videre ingenuum potes quam ille te servum.*[138] Therefore he advises Lucilius to live with people lower than himself in a way in which he would like people higher than him to live with him. In this the thought that anyone can become a slave is very helpful: *Haec tamen praecepti mei summa est: sic cum inferiore vivas quemadmodum tecum superiorem velis vivere. Quotiens in mentem venerit quantum tibi in servum <tuum> liceat, veniat in mentem tantundem in te domino tuo licere.*[139] It could be said that a prudent (and educated) man treats his slave moderately, almost amiably, allows him to participate in conversations, counsel, and common life (*Vive cum servo clementer, comiter quoque, et in sermonem illum admitte et in consilium et in convictum*[140]). Seneca advises masters to eat together with slaves (*omnes servos admovere mensae meae*), in the same way as they do with free people (*quam omnes liberos*), judging their servants not according to the service they do, but according to customs (*non ministeriis illos aestimare sed moribus*), as customs are shaped individually by all, while services are accidental (*sibi quisque dat mores, ministeria casus assignat*[141]). Eating together should not be limited to slaves who are worthy of it, but also

[135] *Ep.* 47, 5.
[136] *Ep.* 47, 11.
[137] *Ep.* 47, 19.
[138] *Ep.* 47, 10.
[139] *Ep.* 47, 11.
[140] *Ep.* 47, 13.
[141] Cf. *Ep.* 47, 15.

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to those who might become worthy of it thanks to such treatment. (*Quidam cenent tecum quia digni sunt, quidam ut sint*[142]). Because you may find a friend not only among citizens but also among slaves (they may be like a good material being wasted because of the lack of a good artisan): *Non est, mi Lucili, quod amicum tantum in foro et in curia quaeras: si diligenter attenderis, et domi invenies. Saepe bona materia cessat sine artifice.*[143] One may be a slave, but still be free in spirit *fortasse liber animo,* while a free man may be a slave to desire, greed and vanity. Moreover, everybody is a slave of hope and fear (*alius libidini servit, alius avaritiae, alius ambitioni, <omnes spei>, omnes timori*), while the worst kind of slavery is voluntary slavery (*nulla servitus turpior est quam voluntaria*)[144] It is worth adding that as Kenny noted in his commentary to Stoicism, although to a stoic sage "[t]hough slavery and freedom are alike indifferent, it is legitimate to prefer one to the other, even though virtue might be practised in either state".[145]

One might wonder why Seneca seems to be a philosopher and a writer worthy of attention: The words of Stabryła may serve, partly, as an answer:

> The moral directives with which Seneca wanted to teach people how to live and act have to lead to the virtue, to the practical skill of coping with the difficult art of life and the even more difficult art of death. Seneca's attention was drawn to all of the key problems with which humanity grappled in his days, and with which it is grappling today. Seneca as an educator did not want and could not limit himself to rigorous stoicism: the ethical tenets present in his writing come from various sources of Greco-Roman philosophy. Happiness, suffering, God, virtue, reason, love, death, crime, hatred, cruelty, wisdom, gratitude, truth, falsehood, peace of mind, good, evil, friendship, freedom, bliss, anger—these were just the key

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[142] Ibidem.
[143] 141 *Ep*. 47, 16.
[144] *Ep*. 47, 17.
[145] A. Kenny, *An Illustrated Brief History of Western Philosophy*, Malden, Blackwell, 1988, 97.

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> points around which the thoughts of this great writer and artist were circling. There have been very few artists in the history of world literature who have been more concerned with the situation of man, his fate and happiness, and very few writers have exceeded Seneca in understanding all the misery and all the greatness of man.[146]

This opinion is also supported by Seneca's deliberations about the virtue of prudence which *foresees what should be done.*

List of abbreviations

In the case of the works of Seneca, the following abbreviations are used:

Br. = *Ad Paulinum De brevitate vitae;*
Cl. = *De clementia;*
CS = *Nec iniuriam nec contumeliam accipere sapientem* (*De constantia sapientis*);
Ep. = *Ad Lucilium Epistulae morales*;
Helv. = *Ad Helviam matrem De consolatione*;
Ira = *Ad Novatum De ira*;
Marc. = *Ad Marciam De consolatione*;
NQ = *Naturales quaestiones*;
Pol. = *Ad Polybium De consolatione.*

[146] S. Stabryła, *Historia literatury starożytnej Grecji i Rzymu. Zarys*, Wrocław-Warszawa-Kraków 2002, 436.