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The Senecan Embodied Self as the Source of Affections and Emotions

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Introduction

To be a self in Stoicism means to be embedded in a body. Before going into the relationship between body and self, it is helpful to clarify what ‘self’ means here. Occasionally it is said that there is no appropriate counterpart for the word in Greek or Latin.¹ That may perhaps be largely true but in the case of the Stoics, we have evidence that the early Greek Stoic Chrysippus used *egō* as a term for the self or ‘I’ and, further, identified it with the so-called *hēgemonikon* (literally translated: ‘that which rules’).² The *hēgemonikon* is the centre of all mental activity and the origin of motion. It confers upon animals and humans the abilities to perceive, to get impressions (*phantasiai*) and to give rise to impulses (*hormai*), which cause movements.³ Humans, being essentially rational creatures, obtain at a certain age much more complex abilities because of which they can articulate their impressions propositionally and assent to the content of those propositions. The context of Chrysippus’ just mentioned identification of the self with the *hēgemonikon* is clearly human: he is concerned with the utterance (*phonē*) of ‘I’ and the gestures *we* habitually make when saying it (pointing with one of our fingers to our chest or moving our lower lip and chin in this direction). But since animals have a *hēgemonikon*, too, it stands to reason that he and other early Stoics must have granted them at least a minimal, that is to say, non-rational self that does not imply that they are able to say ‘I’ or assent to propositionally articulated impressions.

There are at least three ways to investigate the Stoic understanding of the self–body relation. First, since the Stoics were materialists, assuming that the self, I, or *hēgemonikon*, is corporeal, one could tackle it from a merely physical point of view. However, such an approach has to start from the broader concept of the

soul (*psychē*), which the Stoics use when dealing with the physical side of mental life. According to them, the soul consists of *pneuma* (roughly: ‘fiery air’),⁴ and they describe its relation to the body as a form of blending (*krāsis*).⁵ The second approach to the self–body relation focuses on its psychological aspects, while at the same time taking into account its physical dimension. With the term ‘psychological’, I want to emphasize the powers of the self. They are not all shared with the body in which it is embedded, even though it is itself corporeal. With recourse to contemporary philosophy of mind, I would label the position of the Stoics as non-reductive physicalist. Third and last, the self–body relation could be approached ethically, pursuing the question of the relative *value* of the self and the body. In this chapter, I want to take up the second approach.

Some work has been done on the self–body relation in Stoicism.⁶ The contribution of the Roman Stoic Seneca to this subject, however, has not hitherto attracted much scholarly interest. Only Brad Inwood and A. A. Long seem to have addressed Seneca’s approach to any length.⁷ Inwood observes that Seneca is never committed to psychological dualism, that is to say, the view that the soul has irrational forces capable of giving rise to emotions that override the judgments of reason. Instead, the Roman Stoic emphasizes a kind of soul–body dualism.⁸ Long is more occupied with the ethical implications of this dualism and points to the superiority Seneca repeatedly ascribes to the mind.⁹ I draw on both of their works but try to take them further. I want to give a more nuanced picture of the relationship between the self and the body in the philosophy of Seneca by investigating their role in affections and the development of emotions.

To tackle this project, I first turn to Seneca’s idea of involuntary affections, which occur, contrary to full-blown emotions, in a way that does not involve assent. As I will show in the next section, ‘Involuntary Affections and the Body’, Seneca links them to the self and the body in several respects. Afterwards, I delve into the controversial passages of letter 92 of the *Epistulae Morales ad Lucilium* to demonstrate that they are much more Senecan and Stoic than they have taken to be. In my reading, their main subject is the embodied self and its relation to emotions and pleasure. Finally, I summarize my results and determine to what extent the early Stoics may have considered the embodied self as shaping our psychic phenomena.

Involuntary Affections and the Body

Seneca believes that every human being is subject to certain involuntary affections. In the research literature, they are often referred to by their Greek

name, *propatheiai* ('pre-emotions'), but Seneca calls their instances *primus ictus animi* ('initial mental jolt'), *prima agitatio animi* ('initial mental agitation') or *primus motus* ('first movement').¹⁰ He marks them off from full-blown emotions (such as anger) which deprive us of our agential control and make us do things we would not do under normal circumstances (think of hurling insults at someone). Whether we become fully passionate is up to us, it depends on our assent (*assentiri/ adprobare/ assensus mentis*) and the mental content we assent to (for example, 'I should be avenged').¹¹ What is striking is that Seneca connects these involuntary affections to the body:

Nam si quis pallorem et lacrimas procidentis et irritationem umoris obsceni altumve suspirium et oculos subito acriores aut quid his simile indicium adfectus animique signum putat, fallitur nec intellegit corporis hos esse pulsus. Itaque et fortissimus plerumque uir dum armatur expalluit . . .

Turning pale, shedding tears, the first stirrings of sexual arousal, a deep sigh, a suddenly sharpened glance, anything along these lines: whoever reckons them a clear token of passion and a sign of the mind's engagement is just mistaken and fails to understand that they're blows of the body. Thus even the bravest man has often grown pale while donning his arms . . .¹²

Ne extra rerum naturam vagari virtus nostra videatur, et tremet sapiens et dolebit et expallescet; hi enim omnes corporis sensus sunt.

Lest it should seem that this virtue of ours strays outside the natural order, the wise person will tremble and feel pain and grow pale. For all these are sensations of the body.¹³

Scholarship has mainly been concerned with tracing the origin of such involuntary affections in the intellectual history of Stoicism.¹⁴ Fewer efforts have been spent explaining why Seneca connects them to the body. This question is even more pressing because he describes quite different phenomena. Compare the aforementioned brave man who grows pale while donning his arms with someone who shivers after being sprinkled with cold water – an example Seneca cites in *De ira* shortly before the above quoted passage.¹⁵ Even though the affections in both cases accompany a sensation, we would say that only the latter is strictly bodily, whereas the former is partly brought about by some cognitive activity.¹⁶ So it must be asked why Seneca regards them both as blows or sensations of the body.

It is not a new philosophical undertaking to link affections to the body. Already Socrates supposes in Plato's *Phaedo* that pleasures come from the body

(*dia tou sōmatos*) and that the body fills us with sexual passions, desires and fears.¹⁷ But also here, it is unclear whether the body is the single or a partial cause of affections. In any case, from Socrates' point of view, the soul does not experience them any longer when death separates the soul from the body (and if it is a philosopher's soul, it will then not be attached to it at all).¹⁸ As long as the soul is tied to the body, the soul cannot prevent the body from interfering in its matters.¹⁹

Among the Stoics, it is most of all Posidonius who reveals how far affections (*pathē*) are connected to the body by developing a subtle classification in which he distinguishes four different kinds:

- (1) of the soul without qualification (*psychika haplōs*), such as desires, fears and fits of anger;
- (2) of the body without qualification (*sōmatika haplōs*), such as fevers, chills, contractions and the opening up of the pores;
- (3) of the body with mental effects (*peri psychēn sōmatika*), such as lethargies, madness arising from black bile, mental pangs from physical gnawing pains, impressions (*phantasiai*) and feelings of relaxation; and
- (4) of the soul with physical effects (*peri sōma psychika*), for which he refers to changes of appearance in fear and grief, such as tremors and pallor.²⁰

Although Seneca ascribes involuntary affections indiscriminatingly to the body, I want to suggest that he does not mean to say that the body is always their single cause. Instead, he connects them to the body in different senses, similar to how Posidonius does,²¹ as will become apparent from what follows.

Some involuntary affections are brought about by our bodily constituents.²² These affections can be pleasurable or painful,²³ depending on the character of their bodily cause. Seneca never gives a clear example of them but it is possible to extrapolate one from his ethical reflections. He attends at one point to hunger and thirst,²⁴ arguing that all nature demands is to get enough to eat and drink for sustaining life.²⁵ Regularly exceeding these normative restraints leads to the formation of the vice of self-indulgence that makes a person seek ways to stimulate hunger and thirst despite their being no longer present. Hunger and thirst perfectly match Seneca's delineation of involuntary bodily affections: they occur solely based on a deficient state of the body and go along with a particular sensation. Speaking with Posidonius, they are of the body and have mental effects.

Other involuntary affections emerge, on the contrary, after an impression (*species*) or a belief (*opinio*) that one has been wronged.²⁶ Here it is evident that

the cause cannot lie in the body. While hunger and thirst usually come up independently of what we think, these involuntary affections would not arise without some cognitive activity. But what sort of cognitive activity do they involve? Seneca states somewhat enigmatically that ‘the soul does not so much cause them as suffer them’ (*patitur magis animus quam facit*).²⁷ By making this remark, he wants to underline that they never depend on a consciously given assent.²⁸ But does he also offer a positive account?

Like the early Stoics, he is convinced that humans *and* animals have a self.²⁹ The animal self, however, is differently fashioned (*regium est illud et principale aliter ductum*). Consequently, animals cannot speak – all they have is an inarticulate and confused voice (*vox . . . non explanabilis et perturbata*). Further, they perceive and act differently from humans: ‘. . . it [their self] grasps the visible presentations of things that provoke its impulsive behavior, but in murky and confused form’ (*Capit [principale] . . . uisus speciesque rerum quibus ad impetus euocetur, sed turbidas et confusas*). The crucial word in this sentence is *capere*. It stands for a cognitive process that also applies to humans, as can be taken from letter 113, where Seneca relates it to the onset of an impulse:

Omne rationale animal nihil agit nisi primum specie alicuius rei irritatum est, deinde impetum cepit, deinde assensio confirmavit hunc impetum.

No animate creature endowed with reason does anything unless, first, it has been prompted by the impression of some particular thing; next, it has entertained an impulse; and finally, assent has confirmed this impulse.³⁰

As Graver’s and Long’s translation suggest, *capere* denotes something other than mere passive sensation.³¹ It indicates that animals and humans have cognitive mental states that are often also motivational. Still, *capere* does not express assent and therefore it remains involuntary. The early Stoics distinguished something they called *eīxis* (‘yielding’) from assent.³² Inwood was the first to argue that yielding is the equivalent of assenting in animals.³³ He describes it as a passive and automatic reaction to impressions. But *capere* is not a translation of ‘yielding’, neither can it be characterized as a purely passive reaction nor does it occur only in animals. Seneca seems to have been aware of a different phenomenon that he tries to accommodate in his epistemology and theory of action.

The involuntary affections that arise after the impression or belief of being wronged must go back to the cognitive process of *capere*. In their case, it appears to be best described as an evaluation in a weak sense (not involving assent): The self interprets something as good or bad whether it wants it or not. This

evaluation may trigger perceptible bodily reactions: paleness (see the example of the brave man above), knee trembling, a rising heartbeat or cold extremities.³⁴ The similarity to Posidonius' fourth kind of affections is striking.

Seneca maintains that every emotion (*adfectus*) begins with an involuntary first movement (*primus motus non uoluntarius*).³⁵ The question is which of the previously presented two types of affections he has in mind: the one whose cause lies in the body or the one brought about by the cognitive process of *capere*. By itself, a merely bodily affection can hardly be the source of an emotion.³⁶ To have that quality, a self must have valued something in a weak sense as good or bad (think of hunger and thirst, their unpleasant sensation alone seems insufficient to lay the ground for developing an emotion). After such an evaluation, rational agents can pause and reflect on whether they want to become fully passionate. But until then, their animal self applies a mechanism, at the end of which stands an involuntary cognitive affection that may entail a perceptible bodily reaction.

Letter 92

The Text and Its Recent Readings

Seneca's letter 92 has much to offer concerning the psychophysical relationship between the self and the body and their contribution to the development of affections and emotions. However, the theory presented here is hardly elaborated and kept so concise that scholars have proposed quite different readings. Before presenting and discussing these readings, it is necessary to quote the relevant parts of the letter in full:

[1] *Puto, inter me teque conveniet externa corpori adquiri, corpus in honorem animi coli, in animo esse partes ministras, per quas movemur alimurque, propter ipsum principale nobis datas. In hoc principali est aliquid inrationale, est et rationale; illud huic servit, hoc unum est quod alio non refertur sed omnia ad se refert. . . .* [8] *Inrationalis pars animi duas habet partes, alteram animosam, ambitiosam, inpotentem, positam in adfectibus, alteram humilem, languidam, voluptatibus deditam.*

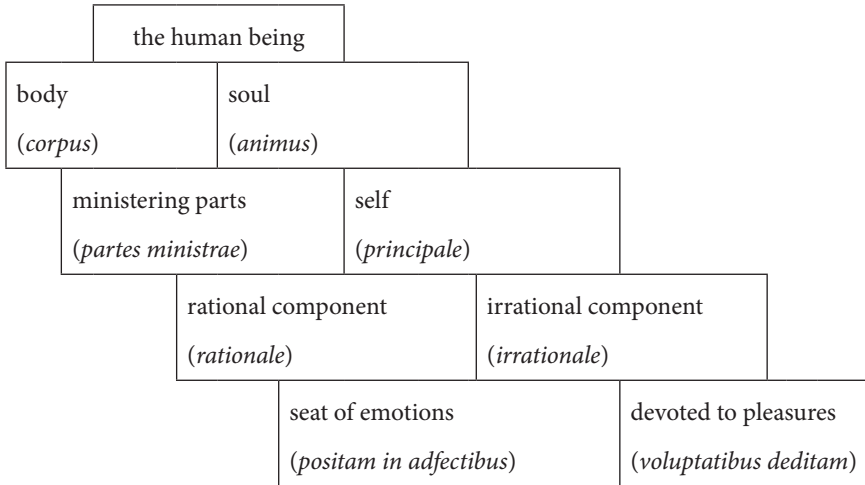
[1] You and I will agree, I think, that one pursues outward things for the body's sake, that one cares for the body in order to show respect for the soul, and that the soul includes ministering parts, responsible for our motor and nutritional functions, which are given to us for the sake of the self itself. This self includes

both an irrational and a rational component. The former is at the service of the latter, which is the one thing that does not look to anything else but rather refers everything else to itself. . . . [8] The soul's irrational part has itself two parts: the one part spirited, ambitious, and wayward, its seat is the emotions; the other base, idle, devoted to pleasures.³⁷

In recent times, these passages have been less interpreted as evidence for Seneca reverting to a Platonist psychology. Instead, there are two strategies that both aim to keep him as an orthodox Stoic philosopher. One is the dialectical reading of Inwood and the other is the rhetorical reading of Graver. I address their approaches in the remainder of this section and critically examine them.

Following Inwood, Seneca adopts Platonic thoughts about the structure of the soul but maintains them merely as an agreed basis to show that happiness is to be found in the perfect development of rationality.³⁸ That Seneca does not take these views for granted is already indicated, according to Inwood, in the first sentence of the letter: 'You and I will agree, I think . . .' (*Puto, inter me teque conveniet . . .*). Also in the first sentence of 92.2, Seneca stipulates: 'Now, if we agree about this . . .' (*Si de hoc inter nos conveniet . . .*). Inwood explains why Seneca is making this dialectical move: the ethical goal of pursuing rationality is supported more readily on Platonic than on Stoic psychological premises. He provides two reasons for his assumption: first, compared to Plato, the psychology of the Stoics is somewhat technical and, second, Seneca writes in an environment in which Plato was more influential.

A consequence of Inwood's reading is that the theory Seneca unfolds in letter 92.1 and 8 cannot be attributed to him. It is a foreign, Platonic piece implemented merely to arrive at the ethical conclusion that rationality is the highest good. However, even without more profound analysis, the text betrays conspicuous Stoic elements: Seneca uses the term *principale* with which he refers to the concept of the *hēgemonikon*,³⁹ and he presents it similarly to the Stoics as that which rules in the soul. The last point gives rise to another objection: besides the talk of irrational parts and their resemblance to the *thumoeides* ('spirit') and *epithumētikon* ('appetite'),⁴⁰ there is not much Platonic going on in the letter. Nothing points to the possibility of a psychological conflict like that which Plato's Socrates narrates in book 4 of the *Republic*.⁴¹ The irrational parts of the *principale* or self are by nature subject to its jurisdiction and do not operate on their own terms.⁴² Several scholars have also drawn attention to the fact that Seneca, unlike Plato, divides the self and not the soul (*animus/ psychē*) into a rational and two irrational parts.⁴³ His division runs as follows:⁴⁴



It may be striking that Seneca first identifies something irrational in the self (*principale*) and then takes the soul (*animus*) to have two irrational parts (see the penultimate sentence in 92.1 and the beginning of 92.8). But the change of terminology should be considered as a variation. To assume that it conveys a philosophical claim (that the soul and not the self possesses irrational parts) would mean that Seneca breaks out of the *diairesis* for which there is no indication. Neither does he use the terms ‘soul’ and ‘self’ interchangeably. If that were true, he would not deploy a *diairesis* or one that differs from the above. The first option contradicts the evidence; the second seems unlikely because then *principale* would not be the Latin equivalent for *hēgemonikon*, which is not what we find in Seneca, Cicero and Calcidius.

Graver approaches the letter from the angle of *Quellenforschung*, being primarily interested in Seneca’s source. She has worked out that it bears many similarities with the so-called Doxography C on Peripatetic ethics in Stobaeus but also diverges from it in important respects.⁴⁵ Regarding the passages that matter for now, she detects that Seneca, as the doxographer in C, divides the soul into rational and irrational parts. Unlike the doxographer in C, though, Seneca does not allow for a psychological conflict in which the activity of the lower parts interferes with the one of the rational element.⁴⁶ On the contrary, ‘the rational part alone . . . determines what the creature should pursue and does not pursue.’⁴⁷ Her explanation of why Seneca speaks of different parts at all is that he strategically adapts himself to the theoretical claims of the Peripatetic he is arguing against in letter 92, in order to defeat him more effectively. This reading differs from Inwood’s in that, at its core, Seneca endorses the psychological model he presents.

Graver is most recently followed by Reydams-Schils, who adds to her account that Seneca also lists the ministering parts at the beginning of the letter in Peripatetic terms ('motor and nutritional functions').⁴⁸ But Reydams-Schils' conclusion regarding the unorthodox shaping of his argumentation extends slightly beyond Graver's. For her, Seneca avails himself of a doxographical pattern that appears in several ancient authors.

I do not exclude that the psychological model in 92.1 and 8 contains non-Stoic aspects to some extent and that the reason for this could be a rhetorical strategy on Seneca's part to refute an adversarial ethical theory. And it may be true that, in doing so, he draws on other sources. My sole intention in what follows is to demonstrate that the passages at stake feature more theoretical elements compatible with Senecan and Stoic philosophy than has been noticed so far.

The Doctrinal Reading

The letter begins with Seneca and Lucilius agreeing on three points:

- (1) One pursues external things (*externa*) for the body's sake.
- (2) One only cares for the body because it is the seat of the soul.
- (3) The soul is divided into ministering parts (*partes ministrae*) and the self (*principale*).

By external things, Seneca obviously means food and drink items necessary for the sustenance of the body. But it is clear that he only confers an instrumental value to them. Actually, they are provided for the soul in the body, which indicates that in some form, the soul's existence depends on the body's existence.⁴⁹ Such a dependence is already implied by the early Stoics, who concede at most that the soul survives the body for some time after death, especially if virtue made it firm.⁵⁰

Seneca then proceeds to divide the soul into ministering parts and the self. This distinction captures, in a nutshell, the essential functioning of the soul that the early Stoics put forward. For them, a part of the soul is, on the one hand, a nerve-like pneumatic stream (*pneūma*) extending from the *hēgemonikon* in the heart to various parts of the body.⁵¹ These include the five sense organs (eyes, ears, nostrils, tongue, flesh), the testicles and the trachea. On the other hand, the early Stoics use the term 'part of the soul' to denote psychic entities. Thus, the *hēgemonikon* itself is a part of the soul, as are its different powers,⁵² which inhere in its substrate much like sweetness and fragrance in an apple.⁵³ In adult

human beings, they encompass sense-perception or sensation (*aisthēsis*; in particular: sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch), impression (*phantasia*), assent (*synkatathēsis*), and impulse (*hormē*).⁵⁴ How the outspread pneumatic streams assist the *hēgemonikon* is illustrated by experiencing pain in one's finger. The pain is localized in the finger. But due to the pneumatic interconnectedness between the body and the *hēgemonikon*, this psychic entity gives rise to a sensation (*aisthēsis*) of that pain.⁵⁵ In other words, whenever the flesh is affected, the *hēgemonikon* employs its power of touch to convey this sensation.

Returning to letter 92, it is noticeable that Seneca does not spell out the ministering parts as pneumatic streams extending from the self to the body but as enabling us to move and be nourished. Perhaps now we face a Peripatetic or Aristotelian aspect, as Reydams-Schils proposes.⁵⁶ That need not be necessarily so. Without a doubt, locomotion and nurture play a significant role in Aristotle's philosophy. However, Seneca does not tie these powers to the irrational component (the *inrationalis* is a part of the *principale*, being first of all the seat of emotions and pleasures and not responsible for locomotion and nutrition).⁵⁷

What is more, several scholars agree that the Stoics distinguished between two senses of the soul: the soul as that which is in a total pneumatic blend with the body and the soul in the narrower sense of the *hēgemonikon*, located in the heart and linked to the body through nerve-like pneumatic streams, as has been demonstrated shortly before.⁵⁸ This distinction is reflected in several Stoic sources, although the Stoics frequently call the soul in the first sense 'nature' (*physis*), 'pneuma of nature' (*pneūma physikon*) or 'pneuma that is grown together with us' (*pneūma . . . symphyton hēmīn*).⁵⁹ There are good reasons to assume that the distinction is also at work in Seneca's division of the soul into ministering parts and the self. What speaks in favour of this assumption is that on the standard Stoic account, nurture is assigned to the soul in the first sense.⁶⁰ The only difference is that Seneca describes the parts of the soul-body blend by which we are nurtured as ministering parts. But that sets merely another nuance and can hardly be taken as un-Stoic. His other classification of the ministering parts seems to allude to those parts of the soul-body blend by which we primarily move, namely our limbs. In contrast to nurture, however, these parts are connected to the *hēgemonikon* or self via nerve-like pneumatic streams, so that it can translate its contents into localized movement.⁶¹ Here the disadvantages of a *diairesis* can be seen, as it conveys the impression that the units into which something is divided are strictly separate.⁶² In fact, our limbs (and many other body parts) are places where the pneumatic streams of the *hēgemonikon* mingle with the pneuma of the entire soul. From a Stoic perspective, it still appears

legitimate for Seneca to contrast them in order to emphasize the existence of a self and a realm beyond the self within the soul–body blend.⁶³ Everything that falls into the latter category is given to us for the sake of the former.

The more severe interpretive issue begins with Seneca dividing the self into an irrational and a rational component (*In hoc principali est aliquid irracionale, est et rationale*). This thought has often been taken as proof of Seneca's unorthodoxy,⁶⁴ because the early Stoics conceptualized the *hēgemonikon* of adult human beings as inherently rational. Seneca does not go into the powers of the self but describes the relationship between its rational and irrational component. It is analogous to the ministering parts and the self on the one hand and the body and the soul on the other hand: the irrational component serves (*servit*) the rational one (as the ministering parts are for the sake of the self and the body is cared for to keep the soul alive). The rational component, however, is autonomous – it refers everything to itself (*omnia ad se refert*).

The issue is not Seneca's view regarding the rational component, which aligns perfectly with Stoic psychology. What is striking is his acceptance of irrational parts within the self. Despite the possibility that he may incorporate a psychological claim of his opponents and coin it in a Stoic way by making the twofold irrational component too impotent to overrule reason (recall Graver's reading), it is plausible that he has his own understanding of it that is compatible with Stoic principles.

He establishes a connection between the irrational part of the self devoted to pleasure and *the body*. This connection becomes evident through his analysis of Virgil's depiction of the Scylla after subdividing the irrational component.⁶⁵ Virgil describes this mythical creature as consisting of two parts: it has a human face and a maiden's breast; from the waist down, it is animal-like, with dolphin tails and a wolf's belly. Seneca identifies this upper part with reason and its perfection, namely virtue (*virtus*) or wisdom (*sapientia*). At the same time, he compares the lower part of the Scylla with the irrational part devoted to pleasure: 'Attached to it [i.e. virtue] is unserviceable and unstable flesh [*huic committitur inutilis caro et fluida*], a mere repository for food, as Posidonius calls it.'⁶⁶ Hence, Seneca does not believe that one of the irrational parts of the self generates pleasure all by itself. Instead, the pleasure he discusses originates in the body and is sensed by the self.⁶⁷ His diaeresis, which began with external things (i.e. food and drink items) needed for the body to sustain the soul, suggests that the pleasure in question pertains to the gratification experienced when satisfying hunger and thirst (the reference to Posidonius additionally supports this interpretation). Thus, Seneca's perspective aligns closely with the observation of

the early Stoics that pain is connected to the body, while its sensation occurs in the self.

Still, it might be odd to speak of an irrational part of the self devoted to pleasure if what is actually meant is the sensation of bodily pleasure within the self. But that is nothing uncommon in Seneca, as an earlier letter shows:

Non educo sapientem ex hominum numero nec dolores ab illo sicut ab aliqua rupe nullum sensum admittente summoveo. Memini ex duabus illum partibus esse compositum: altera est irrationalis, haec mordetur, uritur, dolet; altera rationalis, haec inconcussas opiniones habet, intrepida est et indomita. In hac positum est summum illud hominis bonum.

I do not put the sage in a separate class from the rest of humankind, and neither do I eliminate pain from him as if he were some sort of rock, not susceptible to any sensation. I keep in mind that he is made up of two parts. One is irrational, and it is this that is bitten, burned, or in pain. The other part is rational; it is this that holds unshakable opinions and that is fearless and unconquerable. In this latter resides the highest good of humankind.⁶⁸

Although the logical subject of the irrational and rational part is the sage, both adjectives cannot just stand for the body and the soul (or, more precisely, the self).⁶⁹ The point is that the sage experiences the damages conferred on his body but can resist the pain because he does not evaluate it (in a strong sense) as bad. Such a sensation certainly involves the body but ultimately it is an activity of the irrational part of the self, meaning its being receptive to bodily affections independently of any cognitive processes.

What about the irrational part of the self mentioned by Seneca in letter 92.8 as the seat of emotions (*positam in adfectibus*)? In contrast to the irrational part devoted to pleasure, he provides almost no further information on it. Besides characterizing it as spirited, ambitious and wayward (*animosam, ambitiosam, inpotentem*), he merely adds that it is superior (*meliozem*) to the other irrational part and ‘certainly bolder and worthier of a man . . .’ (*certe fortiozem et digniozem viro*).⁷⁰ Admittedly, from all the steps in his diaeresis, this is the one that has the strongest non-Stoic ring. It appears as if he accommodates idiosyncratically the spirited part of Plato’s or Aristotle’s psychological model.⁷¹ Both ancient philosophers associated it with the irrational part of the soul.⁷² However, neither of them nor any Platonic or Peripatetic philosopher or those inclined towards Platonic or Aristotelian doctrines (as, for example, Antiochus of Ascalon) determined spirit as the seat of emotions.⁷³ This gives rise to the possibility that Seneca at least partly could have inserted his own Stoic ideas here. When he expounds on the functioning

of the irrational part of the self in this context, he may allude to his notion that we are all subject to impressions that cause involuntary affections involving our body, which introduce the development of emotions.⁷⁴ They are ‘worthier of a man’ because, in their case, the self is cognitively active (without giving assent) and does not merely sense bodily pleasure and pain.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have endeavoured to shed light on the psychophysical relationship between the self and the body in Seneca’s philosophy, using early- and middle-Stoic thought as a backdrop. The focal point of this exploration has been their role as sources of affections and emotions. In conclusion, it can be stated that the self senses bodily affections because it is the principal part of the soul that is pneumatically outspread throughout the body. Although Seneca does not explicitly articulate this idea, it is suggested by his view that the soul possesses ministering parts provided for the sake of the self. Furthermore, it is important to note that Seneca associates the sensation of bodily affections with the irrational part of the self, thereby indicating that the latter’s generation of pleasure and pain is not autonomous but wholly based upon the influences on the body. From strictly bodily affections, he distinguishes cognitive affections, such as when one has the impression of being wronged. Despite having a bodily component, they do not originate in the body and are then sensed by the self. Instead, the self brings them about by the cognitive process of *capere*, which I have interpreted as an assent-independent evaluation. It is reasonable to consider that cognitive affections also belong to the irrational part of the self. While Seneca does not provide clear evidence for this assumption, as in the case of bodily affections, it is a natural conclusion from his overall description of them, and it could underpin his acceptance of an irrational part of the self being the seat of emotions, since these affections (and not mere bodily affections) are the starting point for developing emotions.

How Seneca connects affections and emotions to the embodied self reveals that it is not inherently illegitimate for a Stoic to speak of irrational parts of the self. What we learn from him can also help us to explain concepts of the early Stoics that are not immediately understandable in light of their rationalistic psychology. So, they posit that some impressions are impelling.⁷⁵ Drawing on Seneca, the cause for their having such a character could lie in the body or be an assent-independent cognitive activity.

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Notes

- 1 Cf. Inwood (2007: 483).
- 2 LS 34 J (= Gal., *PHP* 2.2.9-11 = *SVF* 2.911).
- 3 For the fact that animals have a *hēgemonikon*, see Ar. Did., *Epit. Phys.* 39 (= DG 471,11); see also Inwood (1985: 32).
- 4 Cf. Gal., *PHP* 5.3.8 (= LS 47 H).
- 5 Cf. Hierocles, *Elements of Ethics* 4.3-10. For some recent literature on the Stoic theory of blending, see Helle (2018; 2022), who is at the same time a good example for the ‘physical approach’.
- 6 Cf. Long (1982 = Long, 1996, chapter 11), Annas (1992: 47–50), Long (1999) and Gill (2006: 29–46).
- 7 Cf. Inwood (2005: 23–64) and Long (2017). Gill (2006: 43–6) touches on the self–body relation in Seneca in his discussion of the Stoic theory of *oikeiōsis* but is mainly concerned with its differences from modern ideas. Reydamas-Schils (2010: 199–202) is rather concerned with explaining how the repeatedly occurring Platonic theme of the detachment of the soul from the body fits into Seneca’s Stoicism.
- 8 Cf. Inwood (2005: 40f.).
- 9 Cf. Long (2017: 220). According to Reydamas-Schils, Seneca uses the Platonic theme of the detachment of the soul from the body ‘... as a kind of propaedeutic device to underscore an essentially Stoic scale of values’ (Reydamas-Schils, 2010: 201). Therefore, as with Long later on, she tackles the dualistic features in Seneca’s philosophy more from an ethical angle.
- 10 Cf. Sen., *Dial.* 4.2.2, 3.5, 4.1 (= *De ira* 2.2.2, 3.5, 4.1).
- 11 Cf. Sen., *Dial.* 4.1-4 (= *De ira* 2.1-4).
- 12 Sen., *Dial.* 4.3.2 (= *De ira* 2.3.2), trans. by Kaster and Nussbaum (whose translation I also use in the following), modified.
- 13 Sen., *Epist.* 71.29. trans. by Graver and Long, modified. I also use their translation in the following and only indicate when I made changes to it.
- 14 The majority of them trace it back to the period of Early Stoicism, cf. Abel (1967: 57 n. 22; 1983: 88–92), Huber (1973: 65), Malchow (1986: 52–7), Rist (1989; 2000f.), Graver (1999), Stevens (2000: 159–62) and Graver (2014: 270 n. 44).

- 15 Sen., *Dial.* 4.2.1 (= *De ira* 2.2.1): *Omnes enim motus qui non uoluntate nostra fiunt inuicti et ineuitabiles sunt, ut horror frigida adpersis . . .* ('. . . indeed, any movements that occur independent of our will cannot be overcome or avoided, like shivering when we're sprinkled with cold water . . .').
- 16 Cf. Inwood (2005: 58–60).
- 17 Cf. Plat., *Phaed.* 65a and 66b–d. In Plato's later dialogues, these emotions are characterized primarily as states of the soul (cf. Müller, 2017: 148, col. 2).
- 18 Cf. Plat., *Phaed.* 80e–81a.
- 19 Cf. especially Plat., *Phaed.* 66b–d.
- 20 Cf. Posid. F 154 EK (= Plut. [?], *De libid. et. aegr.* 6). I am here drawing heavily on the translation of Kidd.
- 21 I am withdrawing here from a position I have taken up in Röttig (2022: 82, 105f. and 157).
- 22 Cf. Sen., *Epist.* 23.6, 24.17.
- 23 Sen., *Epist.* 23.6: 'The pleasures it [the paltry body] accumulates are empty, short, and regrettable' (*vanas suggerit [corpusculum] voluptates, breues, paenitendas*); Sen., *Epist.* 24.16: '. . . unjust assaults or superior forces . . . threaten it [the paltry body] with pain' (*ex iniuria . . . aut ex potentioribus viribus denuntiabitur [corpusculum] dolor*); and Sen., *Epist.* 65.21: 'This [the body] is the only thing in me that can suffer injury' (*Quidquid in me potest iniuriam pati hoc [corpus] est*).
- 24 Cf. here and in the following Sen., *Epist.* 119.2f., 14.
- 25 This thought is connected to Epicurus' *tetrapharmakos*: '. . . the good is easy to get . . .' (*tagathon men euktēt(on)*, Philod., *Adv. [soph.]* col. 4,13, 87 Sbord., own trans.). I will explore in a paper on Seneca's understanding of the *telos* (in progress) how he makes this Epicurean tenet compatible with his Stoicism.
- 26 Cf. Sen., *Dial.* 4.1.3, 2.2f., 3.5 (= *De ira* 2.1.3, 2.2f., 3.5).
- 27 Sen., *Dial.* 4.3.1 (= *De ira* 2.3.1), trans. slightly modified.
- 28 I take him to be referring to this sort of involuntary affections because of the examples he gives beforehand, cf. Sen., *Dial.* 4.2.6 (= *De ira* 2.2.6).
- 29 Cf. here and in the following Sen., *Dial.* 3.3.7f. (= *De ira* 1.3.7f.).
- 30 Sen., *Epist.* 113.18.
- 31 See also Sen., *Epist.* 78.2.
- 32 Cf. LS 53 S (= Plut., *Moral.* 1057 A); LS 65 G (= Plut., *Moral.* 447 A); DL 7.51.
- 33 Cf. Inwood (1985: 76f.).
- 34 Cf. Sen., *Dial.* 4.3.3 (= *De ira* 2.3.3).
- 35 Cf. Sen., *Dial.* 4.4.1 (= *De ira* 2.4.1). See for the model of the three movements of an emotion Röttig (2022: 96f., where I give an overview of the research literature, and 102–13).
- 36 Inwood (2005: 58 n. 57) argues in a similar direction.
- 37 Sen., *Epist.* 92.1 and 8, trans. modified.

- 38 Cf. Inwood (2005: 38–41).
- 39 See p. 61 in this chapter. We also find evidence for the equivalence of the two terms in Cicero and Calcidius. Cicero says that by *principatus*, he means what the Greeks call *hēgemonikon* (cf. Cic., *ND* 2.29). Calcidius, allegedly quoting Chrysippus, lists the *principale* as the most significant part of the soul (cf. Calc., *Comm.* 220 [= LS 53 G]; the passage has to be treated with caution, though, see n. 60 in this chapter).
- 40 Cf. Plat., *Rep.* 4.439d, 440e–441a.
- 41 Cf. the story of Leontios in Plat., *Rep.* 439e–440a. Initially, Leontios did not want to look at the dead bodies lying at a place of public execution but he was then overwhelmed by his desire. Admitting his defeat, he yelled at his eyes: ‘Look for yourself, wretches, and fill yourselves with an image of the beautiful!’ (trans. by Chris Emlyn-Jones and William Preddy).
- 42 Graver makes the same observation, see below in this section.
- 43 Cf. Scott (1986: 83) and Asmis (2015: 229).
- 44 See the section in this chapter titled, ‘The Doctrinal Reading’ for a detailed explanation of every step of the diaeresis.
- 45 Cf. Graver (2018: esp. 327–30 = Graver, 2023: chapter 5, esp. 124–7) and Stob. 116.19–152.25 (the most recent edition and translation of the text provided by Georgia Tsouni is available in the same volume in which Graver, 2018, is published).
- 46 Therefore, the psychological model in C is close to the one of *Republic* 4.
- 47 Graver (2018: 329).
- 48 Cf. Reydamas-Schils (2023: 62–4). For more on this point, see p. 66f. in this chapter.
- 49 Seneca never unambiguously argues for the mortality or immortality of the soul. He largely adheres to Socrates’ tenet that death is either a transition or an end (cf. Plat., *Apol.* 40c5–9; Sen., *Epist.* 65.24; see for more evidence Röttig, 2022: 247f.) and applies the same therapeutic strategy as Cicero in the first book of his *Tusculans* that in either way there is no reason to fear death (cf. Röttig, 2022: 248f.). Given that Seneca considers the mortality of the soul at least possible, it is understandable why he deems the body here as a necessary condition for the existence of the soul.
- 50 Cf. *SVF* 1.146 (= Epiph., *Adv. haeres.* 3.2.9), *SVF* 2.817 (= Lucani, *Commenta* 9.1 = Us. 289), DL 7.156 and Cic., *Tusc.* 1.77.
- 51 Cf. Aët., *Plac.* 4.4.4 (= *SVF* 2.827), 21.1–4 (= LS 53 H) and Gal., *PHP* 3.1.9f. (= *SVF* 2.885). Galen supposedly quotes from Chrysippus’ lost treatise *On Soul* (*Peri psychēs*).
- 52 See the references in n. 51 in this chapter.
- 53 Cf. Iamblichus in Stob., *Anthol.* 1.368.17–20 (= LS 53 K).
- 54 Cf. Aët., *Plac.* 4.21.1–4 (= LS 53 H) and Gal. *PHP* 3.5.31f. (= *SVF* 2.896). Aëtius additionally mentions reproduction (*sperma*) and utterance (*phōnē*) as psychic parts (they extend from the *hēgemonikon* to the testicles, the pharynx and the tongue,

- respectively; see also Gal., *PHP* 3.1.9f. [= *SVF* 2.885]). Panaetius, on the contrary (cf. Nem., *De nat. hom.* 15.212.9-11 [= partly LS 53 I]), groups utterance together with impulse and argues that reproduction (here: *to spermatikon*) is not a part of the soul (*psychē*) but a part of nature (*physis*). Plot. *enn.* 4.7.7 (= *SVF* 2.858) explicitly refers to *aisthēsis* in the context of the powers of the *hēgemonikon*. Iamblichus in Stob. 1.368.19f. (= LS 53 K) mentions *phantasia*, *synkatathēsis* and *hormē* but has *logos* ('reason') instead of *aisthēsis*.
- 55 Cf. Plot., *Enn.* 4.7.7 (= *SVF* 2.858).
- 56 See p. 65 in this chapter.
- 57 Aristotle describes nurture as belonging to the *alogen* (cf. *EN* 1.13, 1102a32f.). In *DA* 3.9, 432a15–3.11, 433b30, he concludes that the prevalent cause of locomotion is *orexis*, which he contrasts there with *noūs*.
- 58 See for the two senses of the Stoic conception of the soul Long (1982: 41, 45), and Annas (1992: 55f.). The first sense has already been touched on p. 57f. and n. 5 (in this chapter). Long (1982: 45) puts the pneumatic extension of the soul this way: '... soul can be treated as either all of its *pneūma* or only the most tenuous parts of that substance, depending on what questions we are asking'.
- 59 See n. 54 in this chapter, *SVF* 2.716 (= Pseudo-Galen, *Introduct. s. med.* 9.367.697, 726 Kühn = partly LS 47 N) and Gal., *PHP* 3.1.9f. (= *SVF* 2.885). It is remarkable that Galen moves from the soul in the first sense to the soul in the second sense without any further explanation.
- 60 Cf. Long (1982: 43–5). Calc., *Comm.* 220 (= LS 53 G), allegedly quoting Chrysippus, mentions nurture as a psychic part in the narrower sense. The reliability of this quotation has first been called into question by Long (1982: 56 n. 2). He was then followed by several other scholars (cf. Reydam-Schils, 2006: 186f.; Ju, 2007; Powers, 2012: 260; Reydam-Schils, 2020: 3). Tieleman (1996: 96–9) is the only one who opts for taking the Calcidius passage as a reliable report of Chrysippus' words.
- 61 There has been a disagreement among the early Stoics as to how the self causes locomotion through pneuma (cf. Sen., *Epist.* 113.23). Cleanthes seems to have thought that a temporal gap occurs between the mental event and the event of walking, whereas Chrysippus appears to have denied such a gap.
- 62 The same holds for the first step in Seneca's diaeresis, where he divides the human being into body and soul.
- 63 It seems legitimate, too, to contrast body and soul against the backdrop that the Stoics would not argue that they share all their features (see the first step in Seneca's diaeresis).
- 64 Inwood (2005: 38 n. 23) gives an overview of the older literature. Cf., in addition, Setaioli (1988: 304f.), Setaioli (2000: 298f. n. 126) and Zöllner (2003: 134).
- 65 Cf. Sen., *Epist.* 92.9f.
- 66 Sen., *Epist.* 92.10.

- 67 To be distinguished from bodily pleasure is the emotion of pleasure (cf. Sen., *Epist.* 59.1-4).
- 68 Sen., *Epist.* 71.27, trans. modified.
- 69 Contra Smith (2004): ‘Here Seneca is primarily concerned with the sapiens and the distinction between the soul and the body . . .’
- 70 Sen., *Epist.* 92.8.
- 71 There seems to me to be a weak point in Graver’s argumentation (cf. n. 45 in this chapter). On the one hand, she argues that Seneca takes over elements of his Peripatetic opponents’ psychology but, on the other hand, she has not proven in any way that Seneca’s subdivision of the irrational component has a Peripatetic origin.
- 72 Cf. Plat., *Rep.* 4, 439e–440a and Aristot., *DA* 3.9, 432b5-7. Frede (2020: 398f. and 469) points to a difference between Plato and Aristotle in that regard: while in Plato spirit is further elucidated as being capable of implementing the demands of reason (cf. Plat., *Rep.* 4, 442b-c; see for further references Frede, 2020: 469), we do not find this understanding in Aristotle.
- 73 Aristotle would neither assert that it is ‘worthier of a man’, as he recognized that animals are also driven by *thumos* (cf. *EN* 3.4, 1111b12f.).
- 74 See p. 60–2 in this chapter.
- 75 ‘What stimulates impulse, they say, is nothing other than an impression that immediately impels to something of interest [*phantasian hormētikēn tou kathēkontos autothen*]’ (Stob., *Anthol.* 2.86.17f. [= LS 53 Q], my trans.). See for the meaning of *kathēkon* here Inwood (1985: 56).

Chapter 3

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