Metaphorical Coherence

Studies in Seneca's Epistulae Morales

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Studies in Seneca's *Epistulae Morales*

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Lund, september 2015
Aron Sjöblad

Contents

Introduction

In the research on the imagery in Seneca's prose, we find a great deal of agreement on central points. In several studies, the metaphorical source domains are grouped in similar categories, and some of these source domains are stressed as the most important ones.[1] There is also a consensus among researchers about the degree of novelty in the philosopher's use of imagery. Seneca's metaphors and similes are to a large extent traditional, but his great skill lies in the way he combines and revitalizes them.[2] As to the main function of the imagery, it is repeatedly claimed that Seneca's prose contains so many images because he wants to speak to and influence the reader's whole person, not only his intellect, he wants to bring his readers 'in rem praesentem', to connect the philosophical claims he makes to their own experiences.[3]

The purpose of this work, which concentrates on the *Epistulae Morales*, is to put these findings – they will be more fully explained later on in this chapter – in a new perspective. In chapter one, it is contended that the manner in which scholars have placed the metaphors and similes in different categories might be carried out otherwise. The example that I put forward here is the function of the human body as a metaphorical source domain, and I show that it indeed functions as a master metaphor and a connecting link between many of the groups of metaphors and similes that has been categorized as different kinds in earlier research. I will show that in the group

[1] Steyns 1906; Smith 1910; Tietze 1985; Armissen-Marchetti 1989.

[2] Steyns 1906;Smith 1910; Tietze 1985; Armissen-Marchetti 1989.

[3] Armissen-Marchetti 1989; Bartsch 2010.

of images that might be called literary in the *Epistulae*, one finds another level of more basic, conceptual imagery, which seems to be used not so consciously by Seneca, but forms an integral part of his thinking. This metaphorical level helps to link different groups of imagery together and in a remarkable way deepens the metaphorical connection between body and soul in the *Epistulae*.

In chapter two, I demonstrate that Seneca's metaphor of the fortress of the human soul, a recurrent image in the *Epistulae*, is closely related to several other metaphorical themes that are frequently used in his work, such as those of trade, slavery, and theatre. Again, my main point is to show that the metaphors are not isolated units in the *Epistulae*, but that they function together and that this reciprocity exerts an influence on how they ought to be interpreted.

In chapter three, I show that two pervasive metaphors in the work, the *iter vitae* and the *iter ad sapientiam*, are closely intertwined, and that they have a similar structure that Seneca draws upon to express certain points. In order to understand this intermingling, I have found Gilles Fauconnier's theory of *blending* helpful. This theory, which is further exposed in chapter three, sets out to explain how two ideas or structures, *e.g.* in a metaphor, can be mixed together and thus form a new pattern with a new meaning, a meaning that cannot be expressed in any other way.[4]

When I refer to imagery, I mean both similes and metaphors. I search especially for those metaphors and similes that have been elaborated or developed and that recur in the *Epistulae*. As the title of this book indicates, I especially investigate imagery that is interconnected, and the new interpretations that these connections lead to. To a certain extent, I rely on George Lakoff and Mark Johnson's metaphor theories. According to these theories, our thinking rely on metaphors and they pervade most languages. Metaphors sometimes form coherent systems, and some of them are shaped by our fundamental experiences of life. Especially, I apply Lakoff and Johnson's idea of conceptual metaphors, *i. e.* metaphors that function as the

[4] Fauconnier 1997, 149-186.

basis for or a part of an idea or a way of thinking. A conceptual metaphor remains as an underlying idea in many thoughts and linguistic expressions even when the latter vary and nuance the metaphor.[5] In my thesis *Metaphors Cicero lived by – The Role of Metaphor and Simile in De senectute* (2009)[6], I inquired into conceptual metaphors in Cicero's dialogue *Cato maior de Senectute* and showed that such metaphors permeate this work. To my knowledge, it was the first investigation of the function of conceptual metaphors in classical Latin. This monograph is a continuation of my thesis and intends to take the study of conceptual metaphors a step further.

I use the term *target domain* to describe what a metaphor or simile refers to and *source domain* in order to describe the field from which the comparison it contains is borrowed. Sometimes these terms will be abbreviated to 'target' and 'source'. The *Epistulae Morales* is referred to as the *Epistulae* or the *Letters*. I consistently use Reynolds' edition of the *Epistulae*.[7] The translations from Latin to English are my own adaptations of Gummere's translation.[8]

A survey of modern research on the imagery of the *Epistulae* and in Seneca's prose in general will serve as the starting-point for my investigation.

In his *Étude sur Les Métaphores et les Comparaisons dans les Oeuvres en Prose de Sénèque le Philosophe* (1906)[9], D. Steyns dedicates eight chapters to different sources for Seneca's metaphors.[1] The main categories into which Steyns divides the source domains are '*la vie militaire', 'la médecine','la navigation et les voyages, 'le droit', 'l'agriculture', 'mythologie, religion et philosophie', 'la nature'*, and '*les moeurs et coutumes et, en général, l'*

[5] Lakoff and Johnson 1999; see also Lakoff and Turner 1989 and – the more famous – Lakoff and Johnson 1980, 2003. 'Light is knowledge' is an example of a conceptual metaphor, both in modern English and classical Latin.

[6] Sjöblad 2009.

[7] Reynolds (*ed*.) 1965, 1966.

[8] Gummere (*ed*.) 1917-1925.

[9] Steyns 1906.

homme'.[10] The abundance of certain metaphors is explained by different factors. The military imagery, for example, is tied to Roman mentality and culture. However, these images do not directly relate to war, It is rather the case that the theme has become rhetorically commonplace in Seneca's time.[11] The many legal terms are explained by Roman culture as well as Seneca's education and activity as speaker in courts.[12] The cause of the high frequency of travelling and sailing as source domains is that these metaphors fit so well for explaining Stoic doctrine, Steyns asserts.[13] Although Steyns' work is valuable, it only goes a small way to explain the function of imagery for Seneca's argumentation. The connections of the imagery to Roman culture and mentality do not explain its literary role. We do not receive an answer to the question of how Seneca's imagery contributes to his philosophical-didactic purposes. The division of the imagery into clearly defined categories is elucidating, but it plays down the fact that the metaphors and similes work together to communicate Seneca's message and teaching. As I mentioned earlier, the main purpose of this study is to show how the metaphors and similes interact and work together to express what Seneca wants to convey.

In *Metaphor and Comparison in the Epistulae ad Lucilium* (1910)*[14]*, C. S. Smith also chooses to place the metaphors in categories on the basis of their source domains, 'the sphere from which they are derived'.[15] He demonstrates how Seneca's use of imagery attests to the philosopher's broadness of knowledge, which, Smith contends, covers 'practically the entire field of the private and public life of the ordinary Roman'.[16] The major source domains, Smith concludes, are the human body and its diseases, warfare, law and

[10] Ibidem.

[11] Ibid., 5-50.

[12] Ibid., 88-102.

[13] Ibid., 74.

[14] Smith 1910.

[15]Ibid., 13.

[16]Ibid., 181.

forensic issues, the relations between master and slave, and travelling by sea and land. Seneca's talent for imagery, Smith claims, lies not in the originality with which he combines source and target domains, but rather in the way he varies and makes use of metaphors and similes which were already established in the literature in his time.[17] The philosopher might develop a metaphorical theme, resume a figure that occurred earlier in a letter, or, in a striking way, group several metaphors together in order to get his point through. Smith stresses the method of picking up and giving new life and intensity to a trite metaphor as characteristic of the *Letters*.[18] Although Smith discusses Seneca's '[m]assing of several metaphors or comparisons on the same theme' as a literary technique that is typical of the philosopher[19], he concentrates on the classification of the imagery. The interplay of the metaphors and similes and what this adds to the teaching of Seneca is not analysed.

In his article 'Metaphors of war and travel in Seneca's prose works'(1980)[20], G. B. Lavery focuses on two indispensable metaphors in the philosopher's prose. He points to the centrality of the war metaphor, which he ties to the idea of *vivere militare est* (the phrase appears in *Ep*. 96.5), and, like Steyns, relates its special status for Seneca to the military tradition of Roman society. Lavery stresses the double role of a Roman soldier as both powerful and subordinated, and thinks that this duplicity fits Seneca's purposes. The Stoic, just as the soldier, is part of a larger organization (*i.e.* he has to follow reason, defend himself from *Fortuna* and the passions, and understand his place and role in the universe), and he shows his value mainly by obedience and acceptance. To 'hold one's post' in a metaphorical sense is an essential part of the war metaphor. The main enemies in the 'war' are *Fortuna* and the passions. Seneca's view of *Fortuna* as an entity that is sometimes capable of inflicting damage, sometimes powerless in front of the

[17] Ibid., 181-182.

[18] Ibid., 183-190.

[19] Ibid., 188.

[20] Lavery 1980.

impregnable defence wall of *sapientia*, can be tied to the idea of the *proficiens* (the struggling and learning Stoic), who risks getting hurt, as opposed to the true *sapiens*, who is invulnerable.[21]

The second metaphor that Lavery analyses is that of the journey. The *iter*, he notes, functions as a source domain both for human life, *iter vitae*, and for the development of the *proficiens* towards wisdom, what we might call the *iter ad sapientiam*. Lavery observes the great variety in Seneca's use of these metaphors. The philosopher sometimes describes life as a stay at an inn, sometimes as a journey towards a set goal, but one we might never reach because we become distracted by other, less important things. In other instances the things we care about are compared to nothing more than luggage on the journey, or Seneca might warn us against travelling along the main road – in short, the theme allows great elaborations of the source and target domains. Lavery finds contradictions and obscurity in Seneca's metaphors of war and travel. Seneca's approval of suicide under certain conditions disturbs the basic structure of the *iter vitae* metaphor since it gives the traveller the opportunity of 'arbitrarily declaring journey's end',[22] he claims. The inherent logic of the *iter vitae* metaphor identifies death with the goal of life, but Seneca's view of death, according to Lavery, is contradictory and unclear, and this also affects the war metaphor. 'Confusion arises as to the goal of both warfare and journey', Lavery concludes.[23] However, Lavery to some degree confuses the metaphorical target domain of life and that of development towards wisdom when he analyses the metaphor of the journey. This point will be discussed in chapter three.

The main purpose of V. S. Tietze's study, *The Imagery of Morality in Seneca's Prose Works* (1985),[24] is to trace the literary sources of Seneca's imagery. She finds that the images often have Plato, and sometimes Homer, as their oldest source, but that they have been transmitted first through the

[21] Ibid., 146-151.

[22] Ibid., 152.

[23] Ibid., 151-155.

[24] Tietze 1985.

Cynics – Antisthenes, Diogenes, Bion and Teles – and then the Stoics, especially Ariston of Chios, but also Zeno, Cleanthes, and Chrysippus. Important Roman transmitters and influences are Lucretius, Cicero and Horace in the *Sermones*. Roman Stoic 'school' philosophers – Athenodorus, Attalus, Fabianus, Sextius and Demetrius – have also played a role, and are mentioned by Seneca himself.[25]

The so-called Cynic-Stoic diatribe – a more direct, ethical *adhortatio*, as opposed to the *cavillationes*, 'hair-cleavings',[26] of *e.g.* Zeno, which address the intellect of the reader or listener, not the emotions and the 'whole person' – is emphasized by Tietze as perhaps the most influential genre as a model for Seneca's prose. From the diatribe tradition, Seneca might well have taken the idea of intensive exhortation, supported by metaphor and simile, which characterizes his style. Tietze also discerns some metaphors that seem to have been directly inspired by Seneca's own experiences, for example the one which involves vine-grafting (*Ep.* 112.1-2) in order to describe the mediation of Stoic teaching, but these are few in comparison to the group already established in literary tradition. Seneca's strength lies in the way he revitalizes traditional imagery, Tietze concludes. In similarity to several other scholars, she stresses the passage in *Ep*. 59.6, where Seneca says that the function of imagery in his works is to bring the reader's own experiences into the philosophical exposition.[27]

Following Steyns' and Smith's model, Tietze organizes the relevant passages in categories of metaphorical source domains.[28] This method gives a good general view of the material, but risks overlooking the interaction between the images.

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[25] Ibid., 224-228.

[26] We find the term in *Ep*. 45.5.

[27] Tietze 1985, 224-228. Seneca writes in *Ep*. 59.6: "Illi [sc. antiqui] qui simpliciter et demonstrandae rei causa eloquebantur, parabolis referti sunt, quas existimo necessarias esse, non ex eadem causa qua poetis, sed ut inbecillitatis nostrae adminicula sint, ut et dicentem et audientem in rem praesentem adducant."

[28] Tietze 1985, passim. See e.g. the introduction, page V-VII.

M. Armissen-Marchetti, whose study *Sapientiae Facies – Les Images de Sénèque* (1989)[29] I will return to several times in this volume, argues against the idea that the main function of Seneca's images is ornamental.[30] She summarizes the earlier perception of Seneca's imagery and says that this view

> …vient sans doute du fait que, jusqu'au milieu du vingtième siècle, les images ont été considérées comme un procédé de style parmi d'autres; or, qui dit procédé, dit technique extérieure à la pensée, élément décoratif, au mieux expressif, ornement surajouté. L'image apparaît ainsi comme un simple moyen de l'ornatio, qui témoignerait du goût extrême de Sénèque pour la rhétorique; et, en effet, durant tout ce temps, notre auteur se vit souvent reprocher d'écrire en 'rhéteur'.31

She finds a typical example of this view in the work *Die Antike Kunstprosa* by Eduard Norden (1898)[32]. Armissen-Marchetti ties this attitude to modern as well as ancient skepticism towards rhetoric. The early Greek Stoics wanted to avoid any kind of 'style' in their speech and writings – strictly speaking an impossible project. The content of the teaching, not the *verba*, was what they wanted to convey (one finds this view also in the *Epistulae*, *e.g.* in 75.1-7, but only as an ideal, not as a realistic aim). This, in combination with a generally negative attitude among the Stoics towards imagination, as not being a part of the *hegemonikon*, the rational part of the mind, created distrust in and a disinclination towards imagery. Norden and ancient Stoicism thus agree in playing down the significance of imagery in a philosophical text, Armissen-Marchetti claims. She, on the other hand, argues that Seneca, although he adopts this view in a few statements, substantially modifies it in practice. Appealing to the listener's or reader's imagination – and emotions – is necessary, he seems to be saying, in order to fulfill the exhortatory purpose

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[29] Armissen-Marchetti 1989. Norden 1898-1915; third edition 1915, 306- 313.

[30] Armissen-Marchetti 1989, 9-66.

[31] Armissen-Marchetti 1989, 9.

[32] Norden 1898-1915; third edition 1915, 306- 313.

he has. One of Seneca's intentions in his writings is to wake his readers' *will* to become morally better and to start off on the road to Stoic wisdom, Armissen-Marchetti claims. Some Stoics prior to Seneca, *e.g.* Posidonius, indeed seem to have forwarded the idea that some affections of moderate strength might reside in the *hegemonikon*.[33] Such claims are also made by Seneca himself in letter 92. By appealing to the whole person, including the imagination, not only to the intellect, Seneca wanted to influence his readers, Armissen-Marchetti contends.[34] She writes that for the philosopher, "il ne s'agit plus de faire savoir, mais de faire vouloir, et que ce sont là des choses très differentes."[35]

Seneca believes that metaphors and similes can contribute to his teaching. According to Armissen-Marchetti, he was probably influenced by Longinus' *On the Sublime* when he arrived at this standpoint.[36] In *On the Sublime* the power of speech and text to captivate the reader, and thus to change his way of life, is accentuated.[37]

While discussing the originality of Seneca's imagery, Armissen-Marchetti finds that the majority of the images are not new, "[l]e dépouillement des images nous a cependant appris que, de facon générale, il en est peu quo l'on puisse dire neuves",[38] but that his new contribution consists of the way he develops them and makes them a part of his thought and message. "[L]'image n'est pas une illustration de l'idée, comme une vignette accompagnant le raisonnement, elle est une autre forme, ou un autre moment,

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[33] Armissen-Marchetti 1989, 9-66.

[34] Armissen-Marchetti 1989, 9-66. Dressler 2012, 145-192 discusses the close relation between metaphor and exhorting exemplum in Seneca's prose. Wilson in Fitch 2008, 59-83, in a similar way demonstrates how Seneca wants to bring the philosophical question into the readers' lives and everyday thoughts in the *Letters*.

[35] Armissen-Marchetti 1989, 44.

[36] Ibid., 53-60.

[37] See e.g. chapter 1, 8, 9, 10, and 15 of Longinus' *On the Sublime*.

[38] Armissen-Marchetti, 205.

de la pensée, lié à l'affectivité et à la volonté",[39] she writes. One group of metaphors is found to be an inseparable part of Seneca's argumentation. This group includes the 'eye of the soul', the idea that wisdom is tied to physical elevation, the personifications of *Natura* and *Fortuna*, and the self conceived as inner space. These metaphors, Armissen-Marchetti claims, are interwoven with Seneca's philosophical thought to such an extent that they cannot be separated from it. They function more or less as concepts and as such help to constitute his thinking.[40]

Further, she identifies one group of what she calls 'fausses images' in his prose. Especially when Seneca describes human psychology, he takes recourse to a number of Stoic concepts which to the non-Stoic reader might seem to be metaphors, but, according to Armissen-Marchetti, are literal descriptions of the human mind as the Stoics conceived of it. An example of these 'fausses images' is the expression *motus animi*, which is not a metaphorical way of describing feelings in the soul, but a literal translation of the Greek word *kinesis*, which in Stoic doctrine signifies a real movement inside the mind. In a similar way, the *intentio* of the soul, in expressions such as *animo intento*, describes what the Stoics considered to be a literal tension in the soul, not a metaphor that describes an emotion or a state of the mind.[41] I will, to some degree, argue against Armissen-Marchetti on this point in chapter three.

In the same vein as Steyns, Smith, and Tietze (see above!), Armissen-Marchetti provides a catalogue of images, but openly admits that it is non-objective.[42] Like her predecessors, she classifies the material on the basis of the source domains, but in an alphabetical instead of a thematic order.[43]

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[39] Ibid., 256-257.

[40] Ibid., 249-268. See also Armissen-Marchetti's book-chapter "La métaphore et l'abstraction dans la prose de Sénèque" in Grimal, (ed.) 1991, 99-139.

[41] Ibid., 207-211.

[42] Ibid., 69-201. See especially pp. 69-70.

[43] Ibid., 69-201.

Armissen-Marchetti's conclusion is that the imagery is an integral part of Seneca's philosophical argumentation, and that his main aim in involving so many similes and metaphors is to stimulate the reader's imagination in order to increase his interest in Stoic teaching and a Stoic way of life.[44] In distinguishing the group of images that constitutes concepts in Seneca's philosophy, criticizing the view of imagery as ornamentation, and stressing Senecas's exhortatory purposes, she, in my view, gives an excellent contribution to the research on Senecan imagery. The question of coherence between the metaphors and similes, however, is not treated at length, and that is where the present book comes in.

In Chapter two I will describe Seneca's metaphorical use of the human body for referring to the human soul. In her book chapter 'Senecan metaphor and Stoic self-instruction',[45] Shadi Bartsch explores a related field. She discusses three recurrent metaphors for the self in Seneca's prose. She starts with the metaphor of the 'inner space'. Here, she has the fortified Stoic *animus* in view, the inner self which philosophy and *sapientia* protect from the attacks and missiles from *Fortuna* and also from the person's own *affectus*, *affectus* that threaten to break into the self and destroy it. The metaphor is essential in depicting the *apatheia* and independence of the Stoic *sapiens*.[46] Secondly, Bartsch stresses the metaphor of 'the self as a commodity' as vital for Seneca. This metaphor involves several related concepts such as ownership, value, and debt. Seneca claims that the only thing we own is ourselves, and the valuables that people strive to possess instead tend to take possession of their owners. Controlling one's time is a central part of owning oneself and the Stoic disciple must make sure he uses it for his personal development. Seneca's view of ownership and time causes him to depreciate the importance of duties and civic career, concepts that the Roman elite highly valued.[47] The third metaphor that Bartsch emphasizes is

[44] Ibid., 373-377.

[45] Bartsch in Bartsch, S. & Wray, D. (eds.) 2009, 188-217.

[46] Ibid., 201-204.

[47] Ibid., 204-208.

'the self as work of art'. In this metaphor, Fidias functions as the paragon, corresponding to the ideal sage. The *proficiens,* or learning Stoic, should work on bettering his soul in the same way that an artist works with a sculpture. Expressions such as *animum formare* and *se fingere* help to establish the metaphorical connection between the artist's material and the soul of the Stoic disciple. Bartsch claims that Seneca has borrowed the metaphor of the artist mainly from Cicero, but while the latter uses it to describe an orator working on his speeches, Seneca changes the target domain to the human soul.[48]

Bartsch's article thus discusses three metaphorical source domains – the inner space, the self as a commodity, and the artist working on a sculpture – that intend to describe one single target domain (but perhaps the most complex of all): the self. This method – combining several source domain in order to demonstrate the complexity of the target domain they all refer to – is fruitful in this field of research, and this book will explore the method further. It is also interesting to note that Bartsch does not discuss the human body as a source domain in her book chapter. As I intend to show in chapter one, this is a very rich source domain for speaking of the human soul, but Seneca has a more indirect way of using it than in Bartsch's examples.

Bartsch also tries to discern the function of metaphor in Seneca's prose. She argues against the idea that the philosopher's use of metaphor is a sign of confused philosophical thinking but also dismisses the claim that the metaphors mainly has an ornamental role.[49] Instead, they assist the reader by connecting the philosophical assertions to his own, practical experience. They bring the reader '*in rem praesentem*' and allow him to see things as if he were present. This means that the metaphors need not necessarily provide philosophical exactness or understanding. The imagery confronts the reader with the problems in question and make them less abstract by connecting concrete metaphorical source domains – familiar objects and situations – to

[48] Ibid., 208-212.

[49] Ibid., 191.

the philosophical issue.[50] This line of thinking is concordant with Seneca's own claims about his use of metaphor, *e.g.* in *Ep.* 59.6, which was mentioned earlier.

Many shorter studies in the field concentrate on single metaphors. One such study is 'Free yourself! Slavery, freedom and the self in Seneca's Letters',[51] by Catherine Edwards, where she describes the different kinds of metaphorical slavery that Seneca discerns around him and condemns: the soul's slavery to the body or to passions and vices and likewise the importance of 'owning oneself', for otherwise one is enslaved to factors beyond one's control. Edwards also brings up the Roman concept of *libertas* and shows that it primarily denotes freedom *from* being controlled by others, not, in a more modern sense, freedom to do what one pleases. Metaphorical 'servitude' for Seneca is thus the opposite of *libertas* in the former sense.[52]

In another article, 'Dinner at Seneca's table: The Philosophy of Food', Christine Richardson-Hay investigates the metaphorical complex of food and eating in Seneca's prose.[53] Central in this context is the conjunction of bodily digestion and metaphorical ditto of books. Lucilius is censured by Seneca for reading too many authors and in an exceedingly superficial manner (*e.g.* in *Ep.* 2). In his descriptions of gluttony and extravagant food, Seneca expands this theme in a sharp, satirical way. The digressions which describe immoderate eating always have a moral purpose, and the dinner scenes develop their own way of expression and their own connotations, Richardson-Hay claims:

> Just as Seneca uses the language of the law, money, and accounting, and imagery of landscape, place, or the suffering body in his writings to stimulate, vivify, enforce, and strengthen his argument, culinary description is another 'dialect' in his language of moral exposition and

[50] Ibid., 2010, 192.

[51] Bartsch 2010, 139-159.

[52] Edwards in Bartsch, S. & Wray, D. (eds.) 2010, 149-159.

[53] Richardson-Hay 2009.

> a penetrating means of exemplifying and exposing human irrationality, moral weakness, and philosophical shortcomings.[54]

The insatiable body becomes an image of the insatiable soul, and the glutton lowers himself from the level of a rational human being to the level of an irrational animal. Under the pen of the philosopher, the luxurious dinners become *spectacula* and demonstrations of vices and force the reader to question his own moral standards and behaviour.[55] Richardson-Hay's method, which puts not only the obvious metaphors and similes but the entire theme of eating and feasting into the focus of his study, is what interests me here, and I draw several similar conclusions in the following chapters.

In their article 'Seneca and Felicio: Imagery and Purpose', Patricia and Lindsay Watson study a specific metaphorical target domain, that of old age.[56] In Letter 12, Seneca uses several source domains when he describes old age. As he arrives to one of his villas, he is first struck by the tumbledown state of the house[57], then by some dried up and leafless plane trees, and finally by the decrepitude of Felicio, an old slave whose childhood he remembers. These three encounters make him reflect on his own old age, and the descriptions of the house and the plane trees are elaborated metaphors for human ageing. The Watsons argue that Seneca is not describing personal experiences in the letter, although he wants to convey this impression. A close reading of the letter seems to show that he turns to literary fiction in order to bring up the subject of old age and to show his own shortcomings as a Stoic by demonstrating to the reader how he is seized by surprise and worry when he realizes that he is becoming a *senex*.[58]Just like Bartsch (see above!), the Watsons thus emphasize the interplay between several source domains

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[54] Ibid., 75.

[55] Ibid., 85-95.

[56] Watson and Watson 2009.

[57] Henderson 2004, in a similar way, describes the symbolic meaning of houses in the *Epistulae*, especially of the villas of Seneca himself in Letter 12, of Vatia in letter 55, and of Scipio Africanus in letter 86.

[58] Watson & Watson 2009.

and a single target domain. My intention is to take the study of this kind of interplay a step further.

In this survey, we have seen how a number of scholars have investigated the function of imagery in Seneca's prose. We have also seen that there is a tendency to regard the metaphors and similes as isolated units (see Steyns, Smith, Tietze, and, to some degree, Armissen-Marchetti). Several shorter studies in the field concentrate on single metaphors, or on how several source domains describe a single target domain. In contrast to these former studies, I argue that we ought to stress the coherence and interaction between the images more.

The tendency just mentioned is of course connected to the classification of the imagery into categories. In chapter one, I demonstrate that there are other ways to perform the classification. I do this by demonstrating how the metaphorical source domain of the human body plays a larger role than has been observed earlier.

1. The Metaphorical Connection between Body and Soul in the *Epistulae*

I

The human body as a source domain for various aspects of the soul is the center of a vast, coherent complex of similes and metaphors in the *Epistulae Morales*. What we might call the *body-soul metaphor* acquires an important role in the letters because it gives the author varying possibilities to express and elaborate the overarching theme of the *oeuvre*: the development of Stoic wisdom for Seneca and his disciple Lucilius.[59] Earlier research has of course taken note of this metaphor. Steyns (1907) treats it as a subgroup together with the metaphors of *moeurs et coutumes*, and does not discuss its dynamics.[60] In a similar way, Smith (1910) underestimates the pervasiveness of the metaphor and only sees it in a small number in the *Epistulae*.[61] Tietze (1985) discusses the body-soul metaphor in various contexts in her book. She analyses a large number of occurrences, but does not consider whether they constitute a larger, coherent complex.[62]Armissen-Marchetti (1989) only

[59] Schafer 2014, 281-98, sees the collection as "the dramatization of Seneca's friendship with and tutelage of a less-progressed fellow-progressor toward virtue" (p. 281); the creation of the philosopher's persona in the *Letters* is the "the master *exemplum*" of Roman literature. (p. 295).

[60] Steyns 1906, 136-154, especially 141-148.

[61] Smith 1910, 28-29. See also 29ff.

[62] Tietze 1985, 127-135, 158-168, 210-217, 176-193.

brings the matter up briefly.[63] Bartsch (2010), as I said in the introduction, discusses several metaphorical source domains that describe the human self, a target domain closely related to that of the soul, but does not mention the body-soul metaphor.[64]

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the many-faceted ways in which Seneca avails himself of the numerous connections inherent in the body-soul metaphor and how these connections can express emotions and attitudes in the human soul in a way that seems more lush and rich in nuances than any other in the letters.

The most basic examples of this metaphor concern simple physical movements or changes of state in the human body. When Seneca writes (emphasis added):

> *Cresco et exulto et discussa senectute recalesco*, quotiens ex iis, quae agis ac scribis, intellego, quantum te ipse, nam turbam olim reliqueras, superieceris. (34.1)
>
> I grow and leap about and, having shaken off old age, become warm again whenever I understand, from what you do and write, how far you have surpassed yourself, for the crowd you left behind long ago.

after hearing about Lucilius' philosophical progress, he uses a number of verbs that have concrete as well as abstract meanings (*cresco, exsulto, discutio, recalesco*). The concrete meanings of the verbs – grow bigger, leap about, shake something off, become warm again – can be applied directly to the human body, just as the abstract meanings are applied to the human soul in the letter. A modern translator would perhaps interpret the beginning of the passage as "I grow in spirit and exult and forget old age and recover my enthusiasm when I understand…". In the passage, the concrete meanings of the verbs add nuances to the interpretation of the verbs because of the metaphorical connection; *e.g.*, Seneca's enthusiasm is expressed by the image that he jumps around, even though he – probably – does not mean that he literally did it. The usually weakened, concrete meaning of the verbs is

[63] Armissen-Marchetti 1989, 99-102.

[64] Bartsch in Bartsch S. & Wray, D., (eds.) 2009, 200-212.

revitalized by the presence of the body-soul metaphor, and therefore influences the abstract meaning.

I will give more examples of how words and phrases with both an abstract and a concrete sense are used in the *Letters*, and how this becomes a way for Seneca to talk about the human soul, by using the body as a metaphorical source. When he talks with Lucilius about sorrow and cites from a letter he has written to Iunius Marullus, a friend of Seneca that had lost a child, he writes (emphasis added):

> Non debes [Iuni Marulle] itaque causas doloris accersere nec levia incommoda indignando cumulare. Non hortor, ut *nitaris et surgas*; non tam male de te iudico, ut tibi adversus hoc totam putem virtutem advocandam. Non est dolor iste, sed *morsus*: tu illum dolorem facis. (99.13-14)

> You should not, Junius Marullus, for this reason, welcome reasons for grief or accumulate lighter inconveniences through indignation. I do not urge you to make a great effort or to stand up. For indeed my opinion of you is not so low as to think that you need to gather all of your *virtus* in order to face this trouble. It is not pain, it is just a bite; it is you who turn it into pain.

The verbs *nitor* and *surgo* have a concrete sense, to make violent physical efforts and to stand up, but in the quotation, what Seneca wants to convey is the abstract meaning: Marullus – and, implicitly, Lucilius – does not have to make a very strong mental effort and struggle to reach the philosophical heights. Again, the corporeal meaning of the words adds nuances to our interpretation of the text. The word *morsus*, bite, at the end of the quotation, is a similar example where Seneca refers to physical injuries to describe minor mental suffering, suffering which Marullus by self-pity turns into serious pain.

We find a related figure of thought in the following quotation, where Seneca thinks that the upright position of the human body is similar to that of the soul. The ‘upright position’ of the soul signifies its desire to be close to the gods and to find a philosophical way to live (emphasis added):

> Quemadmodum *corporum nostrorum habitus erigitur* et spectat in caelum, *ita animus*, cui in quantum vult *licet porrigi*, in hoc a natura rerum formatus est, ut paria dis vellet (92.30)[65]
>
> Just as it is the nature of our bodies to stand erect and point to heaven, so the soul, for which it is allowed to stretch out itself as far as it wants, is shaped by the order of nature in this aspect so that it wants to be on equal level with the gods.

A person's gait also becomes a means for Seneca to separate the philosophically advanced mind from that of an everyday person. When he relates the conversations he has had with his friend and *condiscipulus* Claranus, he remarks that the walking-style and deportment of a sagacious person demonstrate his inner maturity. Again, the movements and appearance of the human body reveals the state of the soul:

> Sunt adhuc tertia, tamquam *modestus incessus* et conpositus ac probus vultus et conveniens prudenti viro *gestus*. (66.5)
>
> There is also a third thing, such as modest manner of walking, a placid and clever face and movement of the limbs which fits a prudent man.

The passages just mentioned also express Seneca's opinion that Stoic wisdom manifests itself in bodily posture and manner of walking, but the large number of parallels of this kind make the carriage and movements of the body constitute a metaphorical source domain that serves to express a mental state. In the following passage (52.12), where Seneca writes about proper behaviour at philosophical lectures, he emphasizes, especially with the expression '*impudicum* […] *incessus ostendit*', that the manner of walking ought to give an air of restraint and dignity. Wisdom is a coherent unity for Seneca, and therefore, no part of a person's behaviour, actions or thoughts can be imperfect if he has reached true insight:

> Omnia rerum omnium, si observentur, indicia sunt et argumentum morum ex minimis quoque licet capere: impudicum et incessus

[65] See also how the text continues in §§ 30-31 of the same letter.

> ostendit et manus mota et unum interdum responsum et relatus ad caput digitus et flexus oculorum (52.12)
>
> If you observe carefully, all acts are significant and you can obtain clues to a character by the smallest signs: the shameless man is revealed by his gait, by the movement of his hand, sometimes by a single answer, by his touching his head with a finger or by the swerve of his eyes.

Finally, the size of a person's body also describes abstract size or greatness. In the following passage, Seneca distinguishes between what might seem 'big' – glory and riches – and what really is: the spiritually wise person. The person who enjoys outer success stands, the philosopher says, on a pedestal which makes him appear to be 'big' and conspicuous to the crowd. A dwarf, however, is not big even if he stands on a mountain:

> Nemo istorum quos divitiae honoresque in altiore fastigio ponunt magnus est. Quare ergo magnus videtur? cum basi illum sua metiris. Non est magnus pumilio licet in monte constiterit; colossus magnitudinem suam servabit etiam si steterit in puteo. (76.31)
>
> None of those whom riches and honours have raised to a higher level is great. Why does he seem to be great? Because you measure him together with the pedestal. A dwarf is not tall, even if he stands on a mountain. A huge statue will retain its magnitude, even if it stands in a well.

Thus we note how deportment, movements, and the size of the human body are used by Seneca when he talks about states of the soul in the *Epistulae.* I will now move on to show how several other groups of metaphors in this text are connected to the body-soul metaphor.

II

Another part of the body-soul metaphor consists of the expressions that compare the soul to the body in terms of health and disease. Steyns, Smith, Tietze, and Armissen-Marchetti take note of the connection between the metaphors of physical health and medicine, but do not mention that metaphorical health and sickness, as I show in this chapter, function as only a

part of the larger body-soul metaphor.[66] What I want to stress here is that the human body maintains the metaphorical connection with the human soul in all the examples I discuss in this chapter. All the actions and states of the human body – the source domain – that the examples describe are easily understood when transferred to the target domain, the soul.

It is no coincidence that Seneca often chooses to avail himself of the parallel in question. Since he dwells so much on the deficiencies and potential improvement of the inner person, the comparison to bodily health is practical and lies near at hand. Health and disease can also be used metaphorically in a great number of ways. Seneca comments on his use of this metaphor in letter 120:

> Noveramus corporis sanitatem: ex hac cogitavimus esse aliquam et animi. Noveramus vires corporis: ex his collegimus esse et animi robur. (120.5)
>
> We knew what bodily health is. From this we concluded that there is also health of the soul. We knew what bodily strength is. From this we inferred that there is also mental strength.

The nouns *sanitas* and *vires* appear frequently when this metaphor is used in the letters, and one might argue that the citation from letter 120 suggests that they have not completely lost their metaphorical implications for Seneca (*i. e.* that they primarily denote physical capacities and thus maintain a metaphorical nuance when they refer to mental conditions).

The disease metaphor has a wide range in the letters. Teachers of philosophy are compared to medical doctors (52.8-9). Bodily complaints denote mental ones (15.1). Corporeal as well as mental diseases are tied to the changing conditions of the Roman society (95.29). A person's attitude towards diseases of the body are contrasted with that towards mental ailments (53.9). Mental health is contrasted with corporeal fragility (56.1-2). In letter 53 Seneca compares corporeal and mental complaints. A fundamental difference, he claims, is that afflictions of the body become more importunate and painful the worse they are, while the *morbi* of the soul will be more

[66] Smith 1910, 39-46, 100-102, Steyns 1906, 51-70, , Tietze 1985, 176-193, Armissen-Marchetti 1989, 132-138.

imperceptible the worse *they* are. Seneca likens the unconsciousness of vices with heavy sleep, which, he asserts, completely deprives a person of his mental faculties:

> Contra evenit in his morbis quibus adficiuntur animi: quo quis peius se habet, minus sentit. Non est quod mireris, Lucili carissime; nam qui leviter dormit, et species secundum quietem capit et aliquando dormire se dormiens cogitat: gravis sopor etiam somnia extinguit animumque altius mergit quam ut in ullo intellectu sui sit. Quare vitia sua nemo confitetur? Quia etiamnunc in illis est: somnium narrare vigilantis est, et vitia sua confiteri sanitatis indicium est. (53.7-8)
>
> The opposite happens in those diseases which afflict the souls. The more ill a person is, the less he notices it. You need not be surprised, dearest Lucilius. For he who sleeps lightly sees things during the sleep and sometimes thinks that he is sleeping while he sleeps, but heavy slumber extinguishes even the dreams and plunges the soul so deep that it has no conscience of itself. Why will nobody admit his vices? Because he is still in their grasp. Only the watchful person can recall his dream, and to admit one's vices is a sign of mental health.

A characteristic trait of the mental weaknesses is that they are difficult to recognize. They steal upon a person. Hiding vices such as *avaritia* or *ambitio* from oneself or others make them impossible to cure. They might, however, become so strong that they manifest themselves anyway:

> Omnia enim vitia in aperto leniora sunt; morbi quoque tunc ad sanitatem inclinant cum ex abdito erumpunt ac vim sui proferunt. Et avaritiam itaque et ambitionem et cetera mala mentis humanae tunc perniciossissima scias esse cum simulata sanitate subsidunt. (56.10)[67]
>
> For all unconcealed vices are less serious. Diseases are on the way to being cured when they break out of concealment and display their strength. Greed as well as ambition and other evils of the mind are most destructive when they hide under pretended health.

In Seneca's account of the old age of his sickly friend Claranus in letter 66 he also contrasts corporeal decrepitude with mental strength. Even though Claranus' body is broken, his mental power and dignity make it appear strong and upright (emphasis added):

> Inique enim se natura gessit et talem animum male conlocavit; aut fortasse voluit hoc ipsum nobis ostendere, posse ingenium fortissimum ac beatissimum sub qualibet cute latere[…]: formosus mihi videtur [sc. Claranus] et tam *rectus corpore quam est animo.* (66.1-2)

> Nature has acted unfairly and placed such a soul in a bad place [i.e. a frail body]; or maybe she wanted to show us just this, that the most brave and happy mind may hide under any skin […]: He seems beautiful to me and just as upright in his body as he is in his soul.

The straightness of the soul denotes courage and strength. Another aspect of the body-soul metaphor appears in the same passage, when Seneca describes Claranus as wrestling with his own body (*cum corpusculo suo conluctantem,* 66.1). Here, the body itself is the enemy, and the image that Seneca conjures up is that of two wrestling bodies, one of which is the metaphorical body of the soul.

Just as people in general are more aware of bodily diseases than mental ones, they also pay greater attention to curing them, Seneca claims. However, this is a mistake. Corporeal complaints are in principle of no consequence, but in the same way that a sick person retreats from all his *officia* to cure his physical illnesses, Lucilius ought to act in order to attain mental health:

> Si aeger esses, curam intermisisses rei familiaris et forensia tibi negotia excidissent nec quemquam tanti putares cui advocatus in remissione descenderes; toto animo id ageres, ut quam primum morbo liberarereris. Quid ergo? non et nunc idem facies? omnia impedimenta dimitte et vaca bonae menti: nemo ad illam pervenit occupatus. Exercet philosophia regnum suum; dat tempus, non accipit […] (53.9)

> If you were ill, you would interrupt your domestic concerns and forget your public affairs, and you would not deem anybody important enough to plead his case during an abatement of your illness. You would prioritize to get rid of the illness first. What, then? Will you not do the same thing now? Do away with all the obstacles and find the time for acquiring a sound mind. Nobody attains it if he is busy with

> other things. Philosophy wields her own authority; she gives time, she does not receive it […]

In some instances wounds and infections describe mental states. Damage inflicted from the outside is described as *vulnera* (*e. g.* 104.12), while the afflictions that are caused by the person himself are called *ulcera* (8.2; 68.8), and consequently, the metaphorical connection between source and target domain are kept intact. As a rule, however, Seneca writes about diseases in a vague, generalizing way when he compares them to mental states and shortcomings. This means, for example, that he will not draw parallels to a person's inner life when he discusses sea-sickness (53.1-6). The tendency to generalize is probably caused by the fact that the metaphorical correspondence between body and soul is difficult to maintain if the disease is too specific. A specific part of the body that is sometimes mentioned by name is the eye (*oculus*; *e. g*. 94.17-20). Sight is perhaps the sense that most easily lends itself to metaphors of this kind, because of the cognitive connections between light and knowledge and their opposites darkness and ignorance. Thus, blindness or problems with the eyes are easily turned into metaphors for philosophical or ethical confusion.[68]

Digestive problems prove to be a more straightforward example of a distinct affliction which Seneca turns into metaphorical use.[69] Seneca likens discursiveness and variety in reading with quick changes of food, which upsets the stomach:

> Illud autem vide, ne ista lectio auctorum multorum et omnis generis voluminum habeat aliquid vagum et instabile. […] Non prodest cibus nec corpori accedit qui statim sumptus emittitur; nihil aeque sanitatem impedit quam remediorum crebra mutatio; non venit vulnus ad cicatricem, in quo medicamenta temptantur […](2.2-3)

> Be careful, however, lest this reading of many authors and books of all sorts become discursive and unsteady. […] Food does not help the

[68] See Smith 1910, 31, 49-51 on the metaphorical use of the human eye.

[69] See Richardson-Hay 2009 on the theme of eating and digestion in Seneca. In her article, she concentrates on how Seneca's descriptions of feasting and gluttony become illustrative examples of human vices and excess and how they are used in his discussions on what proper behaviour is.

> body if it leaves the stomach as soon as it is eaten; nothing hinders a cure so much as frequent change of medicine; a wound will not turn into a scar if one treats it with different salves.

Part of the metaphorical complex of physical health vs mental health consists of the analogy between a philosophical teacher and a medical doctor and, by extension, the view of philosophy as medicine for the soul. A good philosopher, one that Lucilius ought to choose as his instructor – besides the dead, old masters – is like a surgeon, Seneca claims. No more than a lecturer in philosophy should aim at bringing about applause and shouts of joy is such behaviour appropriate on the part of the audience. From a good philosopher it is befitting to receive the teaching or 'surgery' in silence:

> eum elige adiutorem, quem magis admireris cum videris quam cum audieris. Nec ideo te prohibuerim hos quoque audire quibus admittere populum ac disserere consuetudo est, si modo hoc proposito in turbam prodeunt, ut meliores fiant faciantque meliores, si non ambitionis hoc causa exercent. Quid enim turpius philosophia captante clamores? *numquid aeger laudat medicum secantem?* Tacete, favete et praebete vos curationi […] (52.8-10)

> Choose as your guide one that you admire more when you see him than when you hear him. I would not, therefore, forbid you from listening to those also, who have the habit to have public lectures and invite the crowd, if only they go out in public with the purpose of making themselves and other people better, not for the sake of ambition. For what is more shameful than philosophy that aspires to being praised? Would a sick person praise the surgeon while he is operating? Be silent, show respect and submit to the treatment.

Using the metaphor in various ways, Seneca from time to time sees himself as a *medicus* and his writings as medicine for future generations; he writes down 'cures' which he has tested on himself and found efficient:

> Secessi non tantum ab hominibus sed a rebus, et inprimis a meis rebus: posterorum negotium ago. Illis aliqua quae possint prodesse conscribo; salutares admonitiones, *velut medicamentorum utilium compositiones*, litteris mando, esse illas in meis ulceribus expertus, quae etiam si persanata non sunt, serpere desierunt. (8.2)

> I have withdrawn not only from people, but also from affairs, especially from my own affairs. I work for later generations. For them

> I write down some advice, that might be helpful. Some advice that concerns health, I write down. There are certain wholesome counsels, which may be compared to prescriptions of useful drugs. These I put into writing, for I have found them helpful in ministering to my own sores, which, if not completely cured, have at least ceased to spread.

This, however, does not stop him from sometimes admitting that he himself too is 'ill' – in the philosophical sense of imperfect – and in letter 27 he even compares himself and Lucilius to two patients that are treated in the same hospital:

> Non sum tam improbus ut curationes aeger obeam, *sed tamquam in eodem valitudinario iaceam*, de communi tecum malo conloquor et remedia communico. Sic itaque me audi, tamquam mecum loquar […] (27.1)

> I am not so shameless that I undertake to cure others when I am ill myself. But I talk to you about troubles which concern us both, as if we were lying in the same hospital, and suggest remedies. Listen to me as you would if I were talking to myself.

Like a convalescent that risks relapsing into his disease, Seneca writes that he is afraid of the crowd because he fears that old vices may reappear inside him when he is surrounded by people. Apparently he believes that vices may rub off from one person to another like an infection:

> Quid tibi vitandum praecipue existimes quaeris? turbam. Nondum illi tuto committeris. Ego certe confitebor inbecillitatem meam: nunquam mores quos extuli refero; aliquid ex eo, quod composui turbatur, aliquid ex iis quae fugavi redit. Quod aegris evenit, quos longa inbecillitas usque eo adfecit ut nusquam sina offensa proferantur, hoc accidit nobis, quorum animi ex longo morbo reficiuntur. Inimica est multorum conversatio: nemo non aliquod nobis vitium aut commendat aut imprimit aut nescientibus adlinit. (7.1-2)

> Do you ask me what you should regard as especially important to avoid? Crowds. You can still not expose yourself to them with safety. I for my part will confess my weakness. I never bring home the same habits as I had when I left my house. Some of the ideas I had put together are put in disorder. Some of the things which I had driven away come back. Just as sick people, whose disease has hurt their health so much that they can not be taken out of their houses without

> relapsing, so we too, whose souls are recovering from a long disease, are affected. Consort with the crowd is harmful. There is no person that will not make a vice attractive to us, or stamp it upon us, or taint us without our notice therewith.

Another aspect of the health metaphor is Seneca's claim that the changes in Roman society create new and more complicated diseases, that require more advanced medical treatment. In the same vein, philosophy has had to keep up with the ever more sophisticated vices, and become more profound and more many-faceted than in earlier times:

> Quomodo ista [ferculorum ornamenta] perplexa sunt, sic ex istis non singulares morbi nascuntur, sed inexplicabiles, diversi, multiformes, adversus quos et medicina armare se coepit multis generibus, multis observationibus. Idem tibi de philosophia dico. Fuit aliquando simplicior inter minora peccantis et levi quoque cura remediabiles: adversus tantam morum eversionem omnia conanda sunt. (95.29)

> Just as the food is more complicated, so the resulting diseases are complex, unaccountable, manifold, variegated; medicine has began to campaign against them in many ways and by many rules of treatment. Now I declare that the same statement applies to philosophy. It was once more simple because men's sins were on a smaller scale, and could be cured with but slight trouble. In the face of this moral overturning, however, men must leave no remedy untried.

We thus note the width in Seneca's use of the physical health metaphor to describe the soul. More interestingly, we see that there is no disturbance of the basic structure of the body-soul metaphor. The examples that we saw in section two do not in any way run contrary to the ones in section one. Different metaphors might be incoherent, and have meanings and implications that collide with each other, but the ones that we meet here all function together, with the connection between source domains and target domains intact. The metaphors that involve health and sickness constitute another aspect of the body-soul metaphor, besides those of deportment, movement, and the size of the human body. Again, the flexibility and adaptability with which the human body can be used to describe the soul is striking to the reader.

III

Another essential part of the body-soul metaphor in the *Epistulae Morales* concerns the movement or presence of a human body in an abstract metaphorical space or a landscape. Just like diseases, this kind of movement and presence also constitutes a metaphorical source domain which is used to describe a person's mental state. Earlier research observes the travel metaphor, but fails to take note of its wider relation to other groups of metaphors with the human body as a uniting source domain as I do in this chapter.[70] A movement forward of the body corresponds to mental development within the framework of Stoic teaching. A movement upwards, towards a top or up a hill, might connote effort as well as progress. There is the right movement, leading to *sapientia*:

> *Ad summa pervenit* qui scit quo gaudeat, qui felicitatem suam in aliena non posuit […] (23.2)
>
> He has reached the heights who knows what he finds joy in and who has not placed his happiness in the control of externals.

and there is the dangerous alternative, the false way upwards, the strife for a career, for high office, influence, honour or riches, despicable things in Seneca's eyes, since they lie beyond a person's control. In the philosopher's view, this road sooner or later results in a catastrophic fall:

> In praecipitia cursus iste deducit, huius eminentis vitae exitus cadere est. (8.4)
>
> Such a road leads to a precipice. The end of a life on such heights is a fall.

Riches and seemingly important things attract the disciple.[71] Death and poverty scare him away.[72] The true *sapientia* is approached by fight and

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[70] See Armissen-Marchetti 1989, 86-90, 140-142; Tietze 1985,158-168; Smith 1910, 113-124, 173; Steyns 1907, 71-87.
[71] *E. g.* 31.2.
[72] *E.g.* 13.8-9.

struggle. Just as the health metaphor, the metaphor of bodily movement is extremely flexible and is an aid for Seneca to express abstract thoughts. By referring to the movement of the body, he has an excellent means to describe the development towards wisdom and all the risks of erring it involves. Physical effort is transferred to mental effort in the target domain of the metaphor. In letter 52, Seneca speaks of the different prerequisites that people have for philosophical progress. He believes that he and his disciple only have average talent in this respect and elaborates the movement metaphor by also including obstacles (*obstantia*), which refer to his own and Lucilius' limited capacities for the task in the target domain:

> Hoc durum et laboriosum ingenium nobis datum scias licet. Imus per obstantia. (52.7)
>
> You may be sure that this refractory disposition, which demands much toil, has been given to us. There are obstacles in our path.

Fortuna may lie in ambush on the metaphorical road and what seems tempting generally hides a trap. In the following passage, while speaking of the *rectum iter*, Seneca also brings in animals in order to picture the lower, primitive nature of the *affectus*:

> Rectum iter, quod sero cognovi et lassus errando, aliis monstro. […] Ad omne fortuitum bonum suspiciosi pavidique subsistite. Et fera et piscis spe aliqua oblectante decipitur. Munera ista fortunae putatis? Insidiae sunt. (8.3)
>
> I point other men to the right path, which I have found late in life, when wearied with wandering. Halt with suspicion and fear before every good which is given to you by chance. Both beasts and fish are deceived by temptations. Do you think that such things are gifts from Fortune? They are traps.

Even though movement forward is identified with the deepening of philosophical insight, the wise man is also metaphorically immobile. Passage

35:4 shows how Seneca ties wisdom to immobility, while a Stoic *proficiens* or disciple still sways or moves slightly (emphasis added)[73]:

> Quotiens experiri voles, an aliquid actum sit, observa an eadem hodie velis, quae heri: mutatio voluntatis indicat animum natare, aliubi atque aliubi apparere, prout tulit ventus. Non vagatur, quod fixum atque fundatum est: istud sapienti perfecto contingit, aliquatenus et proficienti provectoque. Quid ergo interest? *hic commovetur quidem, non tamen transit, sed suo loco nutat; ille ne commovetur quidem*. (35.4)

> Whenever you want to find out whether you have accomplished anything, ask yourself if you want the same things today as you wanted yesterday. A change of will indicates that the soul is at sea, appearing now here and now there, according to the shifts of the wind. What is fixed and settled does not wander from its place. This happens to the perfect, wise man, and for a short while to the learner and to the person who has made some progress. What is the difference between these two classes of men? The latter moves but does not change his position, but merely sways on the same spot. The former does not move at all.

A good illustration of what Seneca means when he talks of this immobility is given in letter 104 (*e.g.* §§ 29-30). In this letter, Cato the younger's fight to preserve the republic is described. Cato does not cede to Fortuna or choose between Caesar's and Pompey's side. He serves as the model of Stoic steadfastness and 'immobility'.

The reader might be tempted to believe that there is a metaphorical incongruity between the immobility of the wise Stoic and the metaphors that describe the development of *sapientia* as movement forward. However, this is generally not the case. Rather, the wise Stoic has reached his goal and does not need to move any longer, while the *proficiens* still needs to struggle on his forward. The root – *sta* – in the concept of *constantia* expresses this metaphoricity.

Bodily movement and travelling in a metaphorical landscape are indispensable for Seneca when he describes the mental development of the

[73] See Scott Smith 2006 on how the Stoics classified people according to their degree of wisdom.

Stoic. Corporeal strength and weakness are transferred to mental ditto. The landscape in which the metaphorical body – corresponding metaphorically to the human soul – moves becomes an inner, mental landscape where the 'body' might err or lose its way but also find the way it needs to go.

IV

In the imaginary, metaphorical landscape where the Stoic moves – his body metaphorically denoting the soul – he also risks meeting his worst enemy: *Fortuna*. These encounters result in fights. A large number of images in the *Epistulae* have warfare in general as the source domain (see e.g 59.7-8).[74] As Shadi Bartsch writes, war metaphors allow Seneca to unite a military approach to his subject – something that was natural in a Roman context – with the passive seclusion of the ideal Stoic.[75] But what interests us here is when the image is concentrated on the human body as a source domain for the soul. This is evident when Seneca speaks of an individual fight or about the missiles that *Fortuna* hurls at the struggling Stoic. Fortuna clearly becomes a personified power in many instances of the *Epistulae* (see further down in this section). Mireille Armissen-Marchetti notes that the circumstances of the metaphorical fight are not always possible to discern: "[l]´image du combat ne laisse pas toujours apparaître clairement si le combattant est un atlète, un soldat ou un gladiateur".[76] The following examples demonstrate how Seneca develops the theme of personal, physical fighting between the Stoic and Fortuna and how this theme fits in as a part of the larger body-soul metaphor.

Some of Seneca's advice to Lucilius suggests the idea of living a poor man's life. Learning to live in this way is a way of anticipating the 'spears' of Fortuna:

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[74] See e.g. Steyns 1906, 5-50, Smith 1910, 127-134, Tietze 1985, 194-201, Lavery 1985, Armissen-Marchetti 1989, 94-97.

[75] Bartsch in Bartsch S,& Wray, D. (eds) 2009., 188-217.
[76] Armissen-Marchetti 1989, 81.

> quanta est animi magnitudo ad id sua sponte descendere, quod ne ab extrema quidem decretis timendum sit! hoc est praeoccupare tela fortunae. (18.11)
>
> What a noble soul one must have to descend of one's own free will to a way of life which even those who have been sentenced to death need not fear. This is to forestall the spears of Fortuna.

Letter 13 contains an illustrative example of how the Stoic learner ought to challenge Fortuna. Here, it is in the shape of wrestlers that the two measure their strength with each other. It is an advantage to have been repeatedly mauled by Fortuna in order to learn to defend oneself against her, and it strengthens one's confidence to have fought her many times, Seneca claims:

> Multum tibi esse animi scio; nam etiam antequam instrueres te praeceptis salutaribus et dura vincentibus, satis adversus fortunam placebas tibi, et multo magis postquam cum illa manum conseruisti viresque expertus es tuas, quae numquam certam dare fiduciam sui possunt nisi cum multae difficultates hinc et illinc apparuerunt, aliquando et propius accesserunt. Sic verus ille animus et in alienum non venturus arbitrium probatur; haec eius obrussa est: non potest athleta magnus spiritus ad certamen adferre qui numquam suggillatus est: ille qui sanguinem suum vidit, cuius dentes crepuere sub pugno, ille qui subplantatus adversarium toto tulit corpore, nec proiecit animum proiectus, qui quotiens cecidit, contumacior resurrexit, cum magna spe descendit ad pugnam. Ergo, ut similitudinem istam prosequar, saepe iam fortuna supra te fuit, nec tamen tradidisti te, sed subsiluisti et acrior constitisti; multum enim adicit sibi virtus lacessita. Tamen si tibi videtur, accipe a me auxilia quibus munire te possis. (13.1-3)
>
> I know that you have plenty of spirit. For even before you equipped yourself with salutary maxims, helpful in defeating hardships, you took pride in your fight with Fortuna, and much more so now that you have tried your powers and engaged in fight with her. For we cannot trust our strength before it has been tested in many difficulties both on this side and that side, and we occasionally have come to hand-to-hand fighting. So the true soul that refuses to come under the rule of something alien is tested. This is the touchstone of such a soul: An *athleta* which have not been bruised cannot bring great courage to the contest, but he who has seen his own blood, whose teeth have rattled from a blow, who has been thrown to the ground and confronted the

> adversary with his whole body, whose body but not soul have been thrown to the ground, who has stood up more stubborn every time he has fallen, this person goes to the fight with great courage. Therefore, to keep up with my figure, Fortuna has often got the upper hand on you, but you have never surrendered, you have jumped up and stood your ground even more alert. For *virtus* grows stronger when it is challenged. Nevertheless, if you want, let me offer some advice, with which you can fortify yourself.

The passage from letter 13 is the most detailed description in the *Epistulae* of the physical – metaphorical – struggle with Fortuna that the Stoic must win or at least survive. Seneca's main point in the passage is that the Stoic *proficiens* ought to harden himself against the goddess during a long process. By being exposed to this evil power time after time he might, with the right attitude, become increasingly mentally strong, and thus acquire Stoic wisdom. More often, however, Seneca dwells on the readiness for Fortuna's attack, on being prepared for the worst. In letter 68, he praises the author Quintus Sextius for making him feel confident and prepared for the next fight:

> In qua positione mentis sim, cum hunc [Quintum Sextium] lego, fatebor tibi: libet omnis casus provocare, libet exclamare: 'quid cessas, Fortuna? congredere, paratum vides'. (§64.4)

> I shall confess to you the state of mind which I am in when I read him. I want to call forth every danger, I want to exclaim: 'Why do you dally, Fortuna? Let's fight, you are looking at somebody who is prepared!'

This state of being permanently prepared for a confrontation with Fortuna is perhaps the first and foremost task of the Stoic in his process of learning. Losing any other 'battle' in life is of no consequence, if only the one with Fortuna is won. For this victory, all other forms of success can be sacrificed:

> Ille me gratia forensi longe antecedet, ille stipendiis militaribus et quaesita per hoc dignitate, ille clientium turba […]: est tanti ab omnibus vinci, dum a me fortuna vincatur […] (68.11)

> One man shall be far ahead of me as regards public life, another in salary as an army officer and in the dignity which results from this, another in the number of clients. It is worth it to be beaten by all these people, as long as I beat Fortuna.

The example from Letter 68 does not elaborate the fighting theme. Rather, it stresses the importance of defeating Fortuna. What I hope to have showed in this section is that the group of metaphors that involve concrete, physical fighting as a source domain fit together with the other categories of metaphors that have been discussed in this chapter.

Conclusion of Chapter 1

In this chapter, I have demonstrated that metaphors that have been placed in different categories by earlier research can be grouped in another way. The human body functions as a joint source domain for a large number of metaphors that describe states and the philosophical development of the human soul. These metaphors relate to domains such as bodily movement, medicine, travelling in an abstract landscape, and hand to hand fighting, especially with the personified Fortuna. The pervasiveness of the body-soul metaphor in the *Letters* makes it necessary to take many metaphors that might otherwise be considered 'dead' or 'trite' into consideration when interpreting the work, because these metaphors, as I have demonstrated, are part of a larger structure – the body-soul metaphor. Since the philosophical development of the Stoic disciple – Lucilius and implicitly the reader – is the main theme of the *Epistulae Morales*, the imagery that helps to explore this theme becomes even more indispensable when we interpret the *oeuvre*. The centrality of this theme is another reason why metaphors that might be considered dead must be included in an analysis of the imagery.

The body-soul metaphor unites the different, less extensive metaphors, which are handled by Seneca in a more explicit way, while the former functions more implicitly. It is also interesting to note the large capacity of the body-soul metaphor for expressing different feelings, attitudes, and states of the soul. In the *Epistulae Morales*, it becomes an excellent instrument for Seneca, mainly because of its flexibility and adaptability to the philosopher's needs for expressing his ideas.

Finally, the body-soul metaphor makes it apparent that the metaphors and similes in the *Epistulae* must be interpreted in relation to each other. Especially when they have the same target domain – as is the case for the ones we have discussed here – they all influence each other and the separate examples must be interpreted in the light of the larger whole.

2. Seneca's Fortress of the Soul and Related Metaphors

I

A recurrent theme in the *Epistulae* is that of the *enclosed space* of the human soul. This idea is central to Seneca because it is the principal way to explain the integrity and *apatheia* of the Stoic and the ideal of independence from the outer world. The theme is varied in many ways, but the most conspicuous metaphor that seneca uses to express it is that of the defence wall around the human soul or of the soul as a besieged city. The metaphor of the defence wall around the soul is an extension of the more basic, *i.e.* less elaborated, metaphor of the enclosed space. The latter metaphor, however, is also related to many other metaphors in the *Epistulae*, metaphors that express a similar idea and figure of thought. In this chapter, I will show to what extent the metaphor of the enclosed space of the soul occurs in the *Epistulae* and how it governs Seneca's thoughts and reasoning. Even though Steyns, Smith, and Tietze discuss many of the metaphors that I will bring up in this chapter, they overlook the coherence between them and their close relation to the metaphor of the enclosed space.[77] As I explained in the introduction, Bartsch (2009) stresses the metaphor of the 'self as inner space' as important for Seneca. She shows that it can refer to either the soul or the reasoning capacity of the self.[78] However, I will argue that the metaphor has larger implications in the *Letters* than Bartsch seems to realize. Armissen-Marchetti (1989), using the term *l'espace intérieure*, observes the centrality of the metaphor and

[77] Steyns 1906, Smith 1910, Tietze 1985.

[78] Bartsch in Bartsch &Wray 2009, 201-204.

emphasizes the fact that for the Stoic, the border between the 'inside' and the 'outside' runs around the human soul, not around the human body[79]:

> Le mythe de l'intérieur et l'extérieur marque fortement chez Sénèque la représentation des rapports de l'âme et du monde. C'est bien là en effet que passe la frontière: l'intériorité stoïcienne exclut le corps, qui, aux regards de l'ontologie et de l'éthique, ne possède pas plus de dignité que les objets extérieurs. Seule l´âme est garantie par le caractère hautement valorisant de l'intériorité.[80]

However, neither Bartsch nor Armissen-Marchetti seem to note the fact that the metaphor of the enclosed space of the soul unites a large number of other metaphors in the *Epistulae*. In this context it might be useful to bring in George Lakoff and Mark Johnson's term *metaphorical concept*, which denotes a general, widespread idea, expressed with a metaphor, and which functions as an underlying idea in many less extensive metaphors.[81]

I will start this chapter by showing to what extent the metaphor of the defended wall around the soul, which thus functions as a subcategory to the metaphor of the enclosed space, occurs in the *Letters*. In letter 82 it is philosophy that constitutes the defence wall:

> Philosophia circumdanda est, inexpugnabilis murus, quem fortuna multis machinis lacessitum non transit. In insuperabili loco stat animus qui externa deseruit, et arce se sua vindicat; infra illum omne telum cadit. (82.5)

> Encircle yourself with philosophy, an impregnable wall, which Fortune can not pass, even if it attacks with many engines. The soul stands in an unassailable place, if it has abandoned external things, and is independent in its own fortress. No javelin that is thrown at it reaches its mark.

In letter 74 Seneca writes about *commoda*, practical but not truly good things in life, and argues that the moment we start to rely on such things, we

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[79] Armissen-Marchetti 1989, 263-265.

[80] Ibid., 264.

[81] Lakoff & Johnson 1980, passim.

become potential victims of Fortuna's whims (74.17). Only the rational part of our mind can stay unaffected by her power, he claims. Fortuna will sooner or later tear down any wall that resists her, so the only safe way to act is to build an inner, mental defence wall ("intus instruamur"):

> Hoc multarum tibi urbium ostendet eventus, quarum in ipso flore luxuriosa imperia ceciderunt et quicquid virtute partum erat intemperantia corruit. Adversus hos casus muniendi sumus. Nullus autem contra fortunam inexpugnabilis murus est: intus instruamur. (74.19)

> The fate of many cities will prove the truth of this; in their very blossoming empires filled with luxury have fallen, and excess has ruined all that was produced by virtue. We should fortify ourselves against such calamities. But no wall can be erected against Fortuna which she cannot take by storm – let us strengthen our inner defences.

The discussion that precedes and follows the passage in 74.19 makes it clear that the defence wall in this instance is made up of reason, *ratio*.[82]

In letter 113, the protective wall instead consists of boldness, *fortitudo*. The person that girds himself with boldness will endure the 'siege of life' because he only depends on his own force, his own *tela*:

> Quid est Fortitudo? Munimentum humanae imbecillitatis inexpugnabile, quod qui circumdedit sibi securus in hac vitae obsidione perdurat; utitur enim suis viribus, suis telis. (113:27)

> What is courage? An impregnable fortress for human weakness. When one has surrounded oneself therewith, one can endure the siege of life in safety. For one is using one's own strength and one's own weapons.

As we see, Seneca varies the description of the wall around the soul. The wall might consist of *philosophia, ratio*, or *fortitudo*. This is not inconsistency on Seneca's behalf. Rather, he illustrates in different ways the attitude that the Stoic ought to have towards the outer world.

In the following section, I investigate what it is that Seneca wants the Stoic to defend himself against. This is crucial for our understanding of the large

[82] *Ep.* 74.20-21.

complexity of the imagery in the *Epistulae*: the 'wall around the soul' refers to both philosophy, reason, and boldness, but the phenomena that these attitudes should protect the Stoic against are also many-faceted. In sections three and four, I show that several recurring metaphors in the *Epistulae* are variations on the theme of the defended wall around the soul – and connected to the metaphor of the enclosed space. Many metaphors work together in order to nuance the idea of the enclosed and defended space and its philosophical and psychological meaning. We see then that metaphors and similes that are considered in isolation simplify Seneca's argumentation, but when taken together express the philosopher's view of the ideal Stoic and his *sapientia* in an ambiguous way, which is necessary to understand for the reader of the *Epistulae*.

II

Exactly what is it that Seneca wants the Stoic to protect himself against? Seneca repeatedly speaks of violence and torture but he often mentions these to put other, lesser threats in perspective.[83] A trained Stoic ought to be able to suffer torture, Seneca claims, though he admits that the real *sapientes* are few and that it is not possible for most people to attain such an ideal. Torture and other extreme hardships also have a positive side in that they create opportunities to show great *virtus*.[84]

Diseases and physical complaints are also mentioned again and again, and here Seneca takes examples from his own life, *e.g.* his asthma.[85] They are suggested as threats, but they are also mentioned in order to stress that the Stoic *proficiens* ought to be on his guard all the time. *Fortuna* threatens us at all times, and we can never be safe unless we have learnt to despise all things beyond our control.

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[83] *E.g. Ep.* 14.4-5.

[84] *E.g. Ep.* 67.6.

[85] *Ep.* 54, passim.

The one aspect of our existence that overshadows all other problems is death, or to put it more exactly, not death itself but fear of death. *Metus mortis* is the worst difficulty for mankind, Seneca asserts,[86] but the trained Stoic can overcome it, by gaining a profound understanding of the fact that it is the end of trouble and the possibility for the human soul to travel to its homeland among the gods.

Besides physical violence, diseases, exile, and death, there is the more complex question of the negative psychological influence that other people might have on the learning Stoic. Seneca brings up this subject for the first time in letter 7 but later returns to it several times. In letter 7, he warns us of crowds. Other people will pass on their vices to us, and the more so the larger the number of people we meet and associate with:

> Inimica est multorum conversatio: nemo non aliquod vitium aut commendat aut imprimit aut nescientibus adlinit. Utique quo maior est populus cui miscemur, hoc periculi plus est. (7.2)
>
> To consort with the crowd is harmful. There is no person who will not make some vice attractive to us, or stamp it upon us, or taint us without our knowing therewith. And inevitably, the greater the crowd with which we mingle, the bigger is this danger.

An extraordinary example in this letter is the games. To Seneca, the games are an epitome of human vices and he says that he is brutalized by the gladiator fights, but what really troubles him is the spectators' behaviour:

> avarior redeo, ambitiosior, luxuriosior, immo vero crudelior et inhumanior, quia inter homines fui. (7.3)
>
> I come home more greedy, more ambitious, more voluptuous, even more cruel and more inhuman, because I have been among people.

It is not only large public events, however, that might hurt the learning Stoic and render him morally worse. Seneca also thinks that ordinary family relations and acquaintances might cause damage. Even our parents praying for us will create longing for material objects of no value and wishes that in

[86] *Ep.* 101.10.

the end might turn out to be destructive for us, and people will transfer their faults to the people around them:

> Nulla ad aures nostras vox impune perfertur: nocent qui optant, nocent qui execrantur. Nam et horum inprecatio falsos nobis metus inserit et illorum amor male docet bene optando; mittit enim nos ad longinqua bona et incerta et errantia, cum possimus felicitatem domo promere. Non licet, inquam, ire recta via; trahunt in pravum parentes, trahunt servi. Nemo errat uni sibi, sed dementiam spargit in proximos accipitque invicem.(94.53-54)

> There is no word that reaches our ears without doing harm. We are hurt both by good wishes and by curses. The prayers of our enemies instill false fears in us, and our friends teach us bad things through kindly wishes. For this affection sends us out after goods that are far away, unsure, and wavering, when we could bring out happiness at home. We are not allowed, I maintain, to travel a straight road. Our parents and slaves draw us into wrong. Nobody goes astray only for himself; people sprinkle their madness among their nearest and receive it from them in turn.

Another reason why other people might be detrimental for the learning Stoic that is stressed by Seneca is that it is a human characteristic to imitate others, and, not least, their vices. Thus, reason loses its control and we are carried away by habit. We also tend to believe that a certain behaviour is good because many people practice it:

> Inter causas malorum nostrorum est quod vivimus ad exempla, nec ratione componimur sed consuetudine abducimur. Quod si pauci facerent nollemus imitari, cum plures facere coeperunt, quasi honestius sit quia frequentius, sequimur. (123.6)

> One of the causes of our troubles is that we follow patterns in how we live, and instead of arranging our lives according to reason, are led away by convention. There are things which, if done by the few, we would refuse to imitate; yet when the majority has begun to do them, we follow along – just as if anything were more honorable because it is more frequent.

Especially harmful are the persons that talk about luxury as a necessity. They sow bad seed in the learning Stoic's mind, as opposed to the good seed that the gods have planted there:

> Horum omnium sermo vitandus est: hi sunt qui vitia tradunt et alio aliunde transferunt.[…] Horum sermo multum nocet; nam etiam si non statim profecit, semina in animo relinquit sequiturque nos etiam cum ab illis discessimus, resurrecturum postea malum. (123.8)
>
> You should avoid conversation with all such persons: they are the sort that communicate and engraft their bad habits from one to another […] Their talk is very harmful; for even though it is not at once convincing, yet it leaves its seed in the soul, and the evil which is sure to spring into new strength follows us even when we have departed from them.

The Stoic must also defend himself from the non-rational part of his own mind. The vices and *affectus* are compared to wild animals that can be controlled for some time but are never to be trusted:

> Quemadmodum rationi nullum animal optemperat, non ferum, non domesticum et mite (natura enim illorum est surda suadenti), sic non sequuntur, non audiunt affectus, quantulicumque sunt. Tigres leonesque numquam feritatem exuunt, aliquando summittunt, et cum minime expectaveris exasperatur torvitas mitigata. (85.8)[87]
>
> Just as no animal, whether wild or tamed and gentle, obeys reason (for their nature is deaf to advice), so the passions do not follow and listen, however slight they are. Tigers and lions never put off their wildness. Sometimes they moderate it, and when you least expect it, their fierce demeanour awakens and is even worse after having been alleviated for some time.

People who perform great feats might suddenly be defeated by their own vices, *e.g.* greed (94:61). Alexander the great, who was sometimes overcome by sorrow (113.29), and Hannibal, who is claimed to have become weakened and overcome by sloth during his stay in Campania, serve as examples:

> Una Hannibalem hiberna solverunt et indomitum illum nivibus atque Alpibus virum enervaverunt fomenta Campaniae. Armis vicit, vitiis victus est. (51:5)

[87] The *vitia* are also compared to horses (88.19) or to a poisonous snake (42.4).

> Hannibal, who had not been tamed by Alpine snow, was made weak in one single winter by the solace of Campania. He prevailed with his arms but was conquered by his vices.

Even if the *affectus* are allowed to enter the soul only once, they will sooner or later start to grow there and slowly turn into vices (85:13-16). And the *affectus* will awaken as soon as one sees an object of desire or something that gains one's attention, so a learning Stoic must always be on his guard (69:3-4). Many vices lie dormant in the soul until a person is in a position where they can be employed (42.3-4), and they might also sneak upon a person unexpectedly, disguised as virtues:

> [V]itia nobis sub virtutum nomine obrepunt: temeritas sub titulo fortitudinis latet, moderatio vocatur ignavia, pro cauto timidus accipitur; in his magno periculo erramus (45:7)
>
> Vices steal upon us under the name of virtues. Recklessness hides under the appellation of courage, sloth is called moderation, the coward is considered to be prudent. There is a great danger if we go astray in these matters.

We see then that the Stoic must protect himself against a broad spectrum of threats. He must face not only outer threats, such as violence and negative influences from other people, but also internal ones, his own vices and passions. This complex reference needs to be taken into consideration when we interpret the metaphors of enclosed space and the defended wall around the Stoic's soul. In the rest of this chapter, I will discuss a number of other metaphorical themes in the *Epistulae* that are related to these metaphors. I will start by exploring the metaphors of trade and money in section three and then move on to other metaphorical themes in section four.

III

The theme of the enclosed, defended space of the soul is related to other recurring metaphorical themes in the *Epistulae*. One of these is the theme of

metaphorical commerce and currency – of buying, selling, and economical value.[88] Referring to 'commerce' in Seneca, Armissen-Marchetti writes that:

> [l]e thème de commerce fournit un assez grand nombre d'images, métaphores pour la plupart, mais qui, si on les juxtapose, ne font pas apparaître de reseau unificateur. Bref, Séneque emprunte au domaine du commerce et de l'échange une terminologie imagée, mais non un modèle de pensée.[89]

Contrary to her line of reasoning, I would like to argue that the 'commerce' imagery is part of a larger metaphorical structure. It is closely connected to the metaphors of the enclosed space and the defended wall around the human soul. The main reason why these groups of images are connected to each other is that both literal and metaphorical buying and selling, as Seneca sees it, threaten to disturb or damage the inner *apatheia* of the learning Stoic, a theme that cannot be separated from that of the enclosed space.

In this section, I will investigate Seneca's use of the commerce metaphor and its relation to the metaphors that have been discussed earlier in this chapter. For Seneca, it is obvious that regarding the world in terms of economical value corrupts the human mind. Our inclination to imitate the behaviour and mentality of other people is potentially dangerous. We are taught to admire riches and this vice causes us to regard each other as commodities that can be bought and sold:

> Haec ipsa res, quae tot magistratus, tot iudices detinet, quae et magistratus et iudices facit, pecunia, ex quo in honore esse coepit, verus rerum honor cecidit, mercatores et venales in vicem facti quaerimus non quale sit quidque, sed quanti; ad mercedem pii sumus, ad mercedem impii, et honesta, quamdiu aliqua spes inest sequimur, in contrarium transituri, si plus scelera promittent. (115.10)
>
> This very thing, which holds the attention of so many magistrates and so many judges, and which creates both magistrates and judges – that money, which ever since it began to be regarded with respect has caused the ruin of the true honour of things. We have become

[88] See Smith 1910, 102-110; Armissen-Marchetti 1989, 74-75, 98-99 on this theme.

[89] Armissen-Marchetti 1989, 98.

> merchants and merchandise alternately and we ask not what a thing truly is but how much it costs. We fulfill duties if it pays and neglect them if it pays, and follow an honourable course as long as there is some hope of gain in it, ready to change it if crimes shall promise more.

One of the reasons why riches are to be despised is that their owner, in Seneca's view, does not own them on a deeper philosophical level. We estimate other people for things that are not really theirs. Everything except our own selves is under Fortuna's control, and the judgements we make about other people must be based solely on their degree of *virtus* and *sapientia*:

> [I]nsanitis, erratis, stupetis ad supervacua, neminem aestimatis suo. (87.5)
>
> You are crazy, you are misled, you are astounded by superfluous things. You estimate no one for the things that are really *his*.

As Seneca sees it, what is conventionally thought of as a person's possessions is in reality a loan from *Fortuna.* This is evident from the fact that they can so easily be lost, in contrast to a person's virtue, which is his true possession and can never be lost. Later on in letter 87, Seneca develops the theme that conventional wealth is often poverty in the eyes of the Stoic:

> Divitem illum putas quia aurea supellex etiam in via sequitur, quia in omnibus provinciis arat, quia magnus kalendari liber volvitur, quia tantum suburbani agri possidet, quantum invidiose in desertis Apuliae possideret: cum omnia dixeris, pauper est. Quare? Quia debet. 'Quantum?' inquis. Omnia; Nisi forte iudicas interesse, utrum aliquis ab homine an a fortuna mutuum sumpserit. (87.7)
>
> You consider a man to be rich because his gold plate follows him on his journeys, because he farms land in all the provinces, because he unrolls a large account-book, because he owns so much land close to the city that he would be envied if he owned the same amount in the deserted regions of Apulia. When you have mentioned all this, he is poor. Why? Because he is in debt. How much does he owe? Everything he has. Unless you think it matters if he has borrowed from another man or from Fortuna.

The things we think we own tend to control us instead, because they destroy our inner harmony and make us forget about the things we can really own. Like a fever, riches possess *us*, we do not possess *them*:

> Nam quod ad illos pertinet apud quos falso divitiarum nomen invasit occupata paupertas, sic divitias habent quomodo dicimur febrem, cum illa nos teneat. E contrario dicere solemus 'febris illum tenet': eodem modo dicendum est: 'divitiae illum tenet'. (119.12)
>
> For as far as those persons are concerned, in whose minds unsatisfied poverty falsely has stolen the name of wealth, they possess riches just as we say that we have a fever. Conversely, we are accustomed to say: A fever possesses him. In the same way we ought to say: Riches possess him.

Therefore, a Stoic learner must endeavour to become his own, *suum fieri.* As long as he strives to acquire riches, which, in Seneca's opinion, is a way of pleasing other people and being controlled by their desires, his self will not be his own (emphasis added):

> Expectant nos, si ex hac aliquando faece in illud evadimus sublime et excelsum, tranquilitas animi et expulsis erroribus absoluta libertas. Quaeris quae sit ista? Non homines timere, non deos; nec turpia velle nec nimia; in se ipsum habere maximam potestatem: *inaestimabile bonum est suum fieri*. (75.18).
>
> There expect us, if we ever escape from these low dregs to that sublime and lofty height, peace of mind and, when all errors have been driven out, absolute freedom. Do you ask what this freedom is? It is fearing neither men nor gods; it means craving neither wickedness nor excess; it means having supreme power over oneself. It is a priceless good to become one's own.

The true good is beyond buying and selling, while depraved minds are bought and sold daily:

> Bona mens nec commodatur nec emitur; et puto, si venalis esset, non haberet emptorem: at mala cotidie emitur. (27.8)
>
> A sound mind cannot be hired or bought. And I think if one were for sale, it would not find a buyer. But a depraved mind is bought daily.

However, there is also a positive side to economical thinking. As we apply it in many different situations in life, it makes us understand the true nature of things. For Seneca this usually means that one sees through things and realizes that they have no real value:

> Idem itaque in omnibus consiliis rebusque faciamus quod solemus facere quotiens ad institorem alicuius mercis accessimus: videamus hoc quod concupiscimus, quanti deferatur. Saepe maximum pretium est pro quo nullum datur. Multa possum tibi ostendere quae adquisita acceptaque libertate nobis extorserint; nostri essemus, si ista nostra non essent.(42.8)

> Let us therefore, in all our decisions and plans, do what we usually do when we have approached somebody who sells a certain commodity. Let us see how much that which we crave will cost us. Often the most expensive thing is that which we get without paying. I can show you many things the quest and acquisition of which have wrenched freedom away from us. We would be our own, if we did not own these things.

In, letter 87, Seneca uses a bold metaphor to emphasize the idea that virtue has its own currency (*aes*). This *aes*, which measures the value of a person from a Stoic point of view, negates the value of conventional money:

> [Q]uae [pecunia] sic in quosdam homines quomodo denarius in cloacam cadit. Virtus super ista consistit; suo aere censetur (87.17)

> Money falls to certain men as a *denarius* falls into the sewer. Virtue stands above such things. It is valued at its own worth.

Consequently, Seneca claims that the human soul contains the true riches. It is vast, knows no boundaries, and, if it is allowed to rule a person's life, enables him to look down with contempt on conventionally rich people, who are both envious and greedy:

> Scit [sc. animus], inquam, aliubi positas esse divitias quam quo congeruntur; animum impleri debere, non arcam. Hunc inponere dominio rerum omnium licet, hunc in possessionum rerum naturae inducere, ut sua orientis, occidentisque terminis finiat deorumque ritu cuncta possideat, cum opibus suis divites superne despiciat, quorum nemo tam suo laetus est quam tristis alieno. (92.32)

> The soul knows, I say, that riches are stored elsewhere than where they are gathered, that it is the soul that must be filled, not the money-chest. It is permitted to set the soul in power over all things, to lead it to ownership of all things in nature, so that it may limit what is its own only by the boundaries of East and West, and like the gods, may possess all things; and so that it may look down from above on the wealthy, no one of whom is as happy for his own wealth as he is sad for another's.

Now, in what way are these economic metaphors related to the ones that involve the image of enclosed space? Money and possessions have the potential of leading the Stoic learner's attention away from his inner life and his efforts to improve his *virtus* and *sapientia*. They tend to stimulate emotions such as greed and desire. The urge to acquire possessions also exposes the learner to the power of *Fortuna*. However, what is more important is the fact that the economical metaphors involve the same idea of an 'inside' and an 'outside' as the metaphors of the defended wall around the soul and the enclosed space. In letter 23, Seneca urges Lucilius to turn his gaze from the things that glitter on the outside and instead look towards the *verum bonum* that he has inside him. There, Lucilius will find what is truly his own:

> Fac, oro te, Lucili carissime, quod unum potest praestare felicem: dissice et conculca ista quae extrinsecus splendent, quae tibi promittuntur ab alio vel ex alio, ad verum bonum specta et de tuo gaude. Quid est autem hoc 'de tuo'? te ipso et tui optima parte. (23.6)

> I pray you, my dearest Lucilius, do the one thing that can make you happy: cut in pieces and tread underfoot the things that glitter outwardly and that are promised to you by another or through another. Look to the true good and rejoice from the things that come from what is yours. What is this 'yours'? That which is from your very self, from your best part.

IV

There are also other metaphors that are closely related to the ones discussed above. In some passages in the letters, Seneca uses stage metaphors, with explicit references to a drama.[90] He argues that the virtuous man has to act well in the 'play of life', and also presents a number of warning examples. In letter 80 he compares the dandies of his time to actors who play the parts of kings on stage but are only paid some grain and a few *denarii* for their work:

> Ille, qui in scaena latus incedit et haec resupinus dicit,
>
> 'en impero argis; regna mihi liquit Pelops
>
> qua Ponto ab Helles atque ab Ionio mari
>
> urguetur Istmos'
>
> servus est, quinque modios accipit et quinque denarios […] Idem de istis licet omnibus dicas, quos supra capita hominum supraque turbam delicatos lectica suspendit: omnium istorum personata felicitas est. Contemnes illos si despoliaveris. (80.7-8)
>
> The broad man who steps up on the stage and, head thrown back, says: 'Lo I am he whom Argos hails as lord, /whom Pelops left the heir of lands that spread /from Hellespont and from th' Ionian sea /E'en to the Isthmian straits' – he is a slave, paid five measures of grain and five *denarii*. […] You should speak in the same way of these dandies whom a litter lifts above people's heads and above the crowd. All their happiness is an actor's mask. You will despise them if you tear it off.

Seneca's point is that neither the actor's nor the dandy's wealth is their own. We are drawn from our true selves, which we can really own, by our desire to impress others with possessions and attires. In other instances, Seneca argues that if one can escape from the stage of life, it will be easier to control one's ambition and desire for luxury (emphasis added):

> Ita est: inritamentum est omnium in quae insanimus admirator et conscius. Ne concupiscamus efficies si ne ostendamus efficeris.

[90] On theatre metaphors, see Steyns 1910, 73-74; Armissen-Marchetti 1989, 166-167; Tietze 1985, 218-221.

> Ambitio et luxuria et inpotentia *scaenam* desiderant: sanabis ista si absconderis. (94.71)
>
> It is so: an admirer and a witness is a stimulus in all the things in which we go mad. You can make us cease to crave, if you make us cease to display. Ambition, luxury and lack of self-restraint need a stage. You will cure those ills if you hide them from witnesses.

Furthermore, the stage metaphor is sometimes present in the letters even though it is not explicitly mentioned. In letters 62.2 and 99.16, *e.g.*, Seneca speaks about the ostentatious aspect of sorrow and argues that we mourn in a different way when we are on our own than we do in front of others. This, he means, corrupts our true emotions:

> [P]er lacrimas argumenta desiderii quaerimus et dolorem autem non sequimur sed ostendimus; nemo tristis sibi est. O infelicem stultitiam! est aliqua et doloris ambitio. (63.2)
>
> We seek the proofs of our bereavement in our tears and do not give way to pain, but manifest it. Nobody mourns for his own sake. O unhappy stupidity! There is an element of ambition in pain too.

Now, in what way are the stage metaphors connected to the metaphor of the enclosed space of the soul? When we allow ourselves to act on 'life's stage', we will be judged by others and their view of us will influence us and stimulate our vices; we will be tempted to impress and please others, and this will disturb our *ataraxia*. The stage metaphor in the *Epistulae* thus expresses an opinion similar to that of the enclosed space of the soul. Wise people are able to act well in life's play, follow good examples and reject negative influence, but the majority of people are not wise, *sapientes*, and therefore ought to minimize influence from outside themselves, Seneca asserts.

I will mention one more metaphorical theme: just like the economic imagery, the metaphors and similes that involve slavery and freedom as source domains are related to the theme of the enclosed space of the soul. Several earlier scholars discuss the slavery metaphor, but they do not stress its connection to the other metaphors that I analyze in this chapter.[91] Seneca

[91] Steyns 1906, 136-137; Smith 1910, 65-68; Tietze 1985, 146-147; Armissen-Marchetti 1989, 113-115, Griffin 1976, 256-285; Edwards in Bartsch & Wray 2009, 139-159.

places dependency on material objects, status and circumstances beyond one's self on a par with slavery. Most of us are 'slaves' in different ways, he claims, and in particular to our vices:

> Ostende, quis non [servus] sit: alius libidini servit, alius avaritiae, alius ambitioni, omnes timori. (47.17)
>
> Show me a man who is not a slave; one is a slave to lust, another to greed, another to ambition, and all men are slaves to fear.

According to Seneca, most people are slaves to Fortuna, to their bodies or to life itself. *Sapientia*, the opposite of the *stultitia* that keeps us in this enslavement, points out the way to freedom:

> Humilis res est stultitia, abiecta, sordida, servilis, multis affectibus et saevissimis subiecta. Hos tam graves dominos, interdum alternis imperantes, interdum pariter, dimittit a te sapientia, quae sola libertas est. (37.4)
>
> Folly is a low, abject, mean, slavish thing, controlled by many passions of the wildest sort. Wisdom, which is the only real freedom, releases you from these demanding masters, which sometimes give orders in turn, sometimes together.

The same idea recurs in 104.16, where Seneca stresses that studies and contact with wise people help us ease the frustration that follows from competing with others in terms of careers and wealth. Devoting our time to studying can set us free from this kind of slavery:

> [S]ic eximendus animus ex miserrima servitute in libertatem adseritur. (104.16)
>
> In this way the soul can be saved from a most wretched slavery and won over to liberty.

The stage and slavery metaphors exploit a polarity between the inner, mental world of the human soul and the world outside it. Therefore, I argue, they have a structure that is similar to that of the economic metaphors and the metaphors of the enclosed space of the soul.

Conclusion of Chapter 2

In this chapter I have discussed several groups of metaphors that are connected by a similar structure. The metaphors of economy, theatre, slavery, and of the defended wall around the human soul all share the idea of an inner space that needs to be protected from the outer world. When Bartsch and Armissen-Marchetti discuss the metaphor of the inner space (see section one of this chapter), they do not stress its relation to all these other metaphors. Among the other scholars in this field, there is a clear tendency to regard the metaphors as isolated entities (see section one again). The connections between the metaphors, however, make it necessary to interpret them together. They influence each other. The different groups of metaphors all have their own implications and their own relations between source and target domains, but they are also coherent and form a larger whole. Therefore, we are dealing with a very complex set of ideas when we want to interpret them. As I also showed in section two, the wall around the soul might 'consist of' things as different as *ratio, fortitudo,* or *philosophia*. Its composite nature adds another element of complexity to the way the metaphors should be interpreted. So does the many-faceted nature of the threats to the 'inner space', as I demonstrated in section two. These threats function as target domains in all the metaphors that have been discussed in this chapter.

With this rich imagery, Seneca wants to create a way of thinking in his readers, where the readers must practice using either bravery, reason or philosophical thinking in different situations and avoid applying simplistic ideas to their lives when they pursue their learning process as Stoics. Rather than bringing the readers 'in rem praesentem', to confront them with practical situations, the main purpose of this imagery might be this: to form an attitude in the reader and to add complexity and depth to the general Stoic idea of independence from the outer world.

3. The Relation between *the iter ad sapientiam* and the *iter vitae* Metaphors in the *Epistulae*

I

In this chapter, I want to draw attention to new aspects of meaning which might be gained when one considers the relations between different recurring metaphors in the *Epistulae Morales*. I will concentrate on Seneca's double use of the metaphor of travel. The journey, and sometimes just the 'road', functions as a source domain for two different target domains in the *Epistulae*: that of philosophical progress and that of life itself. On the one hand, we have the metaphor of 'movement towards wisdom' – a central subject for the philosopher naturally – which I here call the *iter ad sapientiam*; on the other, we have the 'road of life' – which will here be called the *iter vitae* metaphor. Earlier research has often divided Seneca's travel imagery into these two metaphors.[92] In this context, I especially want to draw attention to G.B. Lavery's article 'Metaphors of War and Travel in Seneca's Prose Works' (1980).[93] When Lavery analyses Seneca's travel

[92] Steyns 1906, 71-87; Smith 1910, 113-126;Tietze 1985, 158-168; Armissen-Marchetti 1989, 82-83, 86-90.

[93] Lavery 1980; 147-157.

metaphors, he finds that the act of suicide, which is sometimes advocated by Seneca, disturbs the structure of the *iter vitae* metaphor:

> This endorsement of suicide as a way out of difficulties is, purely in terms of the iter metaphor, somewhat contradictory in its thrust. If the purpose of a journey is to reach a stated destination one should presumably press on to that goal. But here Seneca allows for a decision *in itinere* arbitrarily declaring journey's end. The individual decides that he has arrived without having arrived. At some level, in terms of the symbolism he employs, the philosopher seems to be aware that approval of suicide does not really coincide and harmonize with dedicated Stoic striving toward a goal. The gratuitous assertions that the goal has been reached seems almost whimsical.[94]

In this chapter, I will argue that the difficulty of uniting a positive view of suicide with the structure inherent in the *iter vitae* metaphor can be solved if we consider the close relation between the *iter vitae* and the *iter ad sapientiam* metaphors.

As I will show, there is an interplay between these two metaphors in the *Epistulae*. I will start by demonstrating first how the *iter ad sapientiam* metaphor (section two) and then the *iter vitae* metaphor (section three) are used in the work. In section four, I will analyse how they function together and how the interplay between them creates new meaning, which cannot be expressed in any other way.

II

Finding out how to make philosophical progress and how to become wiser, then working to make that progress and communicating the insights to Lucilius and to the readers of the letters – this is the great theme of the *Epistulae Morales*. Seneca has to confront the problem of how to describe such an abstract process as philosophical learning and deepening of insight in

[94] Lavery 1980, 152.

a straightforward and seemingly simple way. Earlier in this book, we have seen how the human body functions as a many-faceted source domain for referring to the soul and how the theme of the protected inner space of the soul is varied in many ways. These are some the ways Seneca uses to refer to philosophical progress. Another conspicuous image that he uses for this purpose is that of the 'right road', *i. e.* the metaphorical 'path' or 'route' that the Stoic learner must travel in order to reach the state of Stoic wisdom. The 'road' is sometimes explicitly called an *iter*, as in 8.3:

> *Rectum iter*, quod sero cognovi et lassus errando, aliis monstro. (8.3)
>
> I point to other men the right path, which I have found late in life, when wearied with wandering.

or a *via*, as in 23.7:

> [V]eri boni aviditas tuta est. Quid est istud interrogas, aut unde subeat? Dicam: ex bona conscientia, ex honestis consiliis, ex rectis actionibus, ex contemptu fortuitorum, ex placido vitae et continuo tenore *unam prementis viam*. (23.7)
>
> The real good may be coveted with safety. Do you ask me what this real good is, and whence it derives? I will tell you: it comes from a good conscience, from honourable purposes, from right actions, from contempt of the gifts of chance, from an even and calm way of living which treads but one path.

At other times only the parallel between moving forward and philosophical/moral insight is drawn, and the idea of a *via* or *iter* is implied rather than clearly expressed:

> Rem utilem desideras [sc. Lucili] et *ad sapientiam properanti* necessariam, dividi philosophiam et ingens corpus eius in membra disponi (89.1)
>
> It is a useful fact that you wish to know, Lucilius, one which is essential to him who hastens after wisdom – namely, the parts of philosophy and the division of its huge bulk into separate members.

Sometimes Seneca elaborates the source domain of the metaphor, adding details and comparing the progress of the disciple to climbing a hill or a mountain. The act of moving uphill is easily mapped to difficulties and resistance in the target domain:

> Tanto melior, surge et inspira et *clivum istum* uno si potes spiritu *exsupera*. (31.4)
>
> By so much you are better! Rise, draw a fresh breath, and surmount that hill, if possible, in a single spurt!

The author also avails himself of the climbing aspect of the metaphor in order to demonstrate the point that wisdom, once achieved, does not differ in degree between different persons. Having reached the desired *sapientia*, they have all reached the same thing:

> Inter cetera hoc habet boni sapientia: nemo ab altero potest vinci nisi dum *ascenditur*. Cum *ad summum perveneris*, paria sunt; non est incremento locus, statur. (79.8)
>
> Wisdom has this advantage, among others, – that no man can be outdone by another, except during the climb. But when you have arrived at the top, it is a draw; there is no room for further ascent, the game is over.

The affinity of the "climbing/mounting" theme to the metaphorical connection between altitude and wisdom is obvious, and Seneca often avails himself of verticality or vertical relations when he talks metaphorically about *sapientia*:

> Expectant nos, si ex hac aliquando faece in *illud* evadimus *sublime et excelsum*, tranquillitas animi et expulsis erroribus absoluta libertas. (75.18)
>
> There await us, if we ever escape from these low dregs to that sublime and lofty height, peace of mind and, when all error has been driven out, perfect liberty.

Another aspect of the *iter ad sapientiam* metaphor is the potential erring of the indecisive person or of the person who changes his goals or is governed by external forces such as passions or *Fortuna* (see also the passage from 8.3

(‘*errando*’) quoted above). In the following passage, Seneca describes the immense and destructive territory that the erring wanderer runs the risk of entering:

> Nullus enim terminus falso est. *Via eunti aliquid extremum est: error immensum est*. Retrahe ergo te a vanis, et cum voles scire quod petes, utrum naturalem habeat an caecam cupiditatem, considera num possit alicubi consistere: si longe progresso semper aliquid longius restat, scito id naturale non esse. (16.9)

> The false has no limits. When you are travelling on a road, there must be an end; but when astray, your wanderings are limitless. Recall your steps, therefore, from idle things, and when you want to know whether that which you seek is based upon a natural or upon a misleading desire, consider whether it can stop at any definite point. If you find, after having travelled far, that there is a more distant goal always in view, you may be sure that this condition is contrary to nature.

When Seneca reproaches Lucilius for studying too many authors at the same time instead of concentrating his efforts, he compares the discursive way of reading to purposeless roving. Again, physical and geographical erring serves to describe the faults of the human soul:

> Ex iis quae mihi scribis et ex iis quae audio bonam spem de te concipio: non *discurris* nec *locorum mutationibus* inquietaris. Aegri animi *ista iactatio* est […] Illud autem vide, ne ista lectio auctorum multorum et omnis generis voluminum habeat aliquid *vagum et instabile.* (2.1-2.)

> Judging by what you write to me, and by what I hear, I am forming a good opinion of you. You do not run hither and thither and distract yourself by changing your abode; for such restlessness is the sign of a disordered spirit. […] Be careful, however, lest this reading of many authors and books of every sort may tend to make you discursive and unsteady.

Seneca then asks what forces threaten to draw the traveller from the right road:

> Quid est hoc, Lucili, quod nos *alio tendentes alio trahit* et *eo, unde recedere* cupimus *impellit*? (52.1)

> What is this force, Lucilius, that drags us in one direction when we are aiming in another, urging us on to the exact place from which we long to withdraw?

The main 'force' that threatens the learning Stoic is the passions, which might make him act in a non-rational way. Seneca describes the 'forces of the mind' and how they might drive a person in a certain direction. When a person is not governed by reason, uncontrolled emotions will make him stray from the right road. The *affectus* threaten the learner on his path forward. They can make him follow his desire instead, or disturb the intellectual part of his mind so that it cannot function in a rational way. In another letter, Seneca suggests that Lucilius 'remove' his soul – which causes him too many problems – from personal anxieties and that he directs it to public affairs:

> Nunc admoneo ut animum tuum non mergas in istam sollicitudinem; hebetabitur enim et minus habebit vigoris cum exurgendum erit. *Abduc illum a privata causa ad publicam* (24.16)
>
> I now warn you not to drown your soul in these petty anxieties of yours; if you do, the soul will be dulled and will have too little vigour left, when the time comes for it to arise. Remove the mind from this case of yours to the case of men in general.

Therefore, the Stoic disciple must use the 'force' of his will and his intellect in order to cope with the force of the passions. Perhaps the clearest example of this threat in the *Epistulae* for the traveller on his journey is Letter 31, where Seneca refers to a scene in the *Odyssey* to make his opinion clear. The song of the Sirens tempts and allures the *proficiens* everywhere, and he needs to be ever on his guard:

> Ad summam sapiens eris, si cluseris aures, quibus ceram parum est obdere: firmiore spissamento opus est quam in sociis usum Ulixem ferunt. Illa vox quae timebatur erat blanda, non tamen publica: at haec quae timenda est non ex uno scopulo sed ex omni terrarum parte circumsonat. Praetervehere itaque non unum locum insidiosa voluptate suspectum, sed omnes urbes. (31.2)
>
> In short, you will be a wise man, if you close your ears; nor is it enough to close them with wax; you need a denser stopple than that which they say Ulysses used for his comrades. The song which he

> feared was alluring, but came not from every side; the song however, which you have to fear, echoes round you not from a single islet, but from every corner of the world. Sail, therefore, not past one region which you mistrust because of its treacherous delights, but past every city.

As we see, the song of the Sirens becomes a symbol of general temptations to stray from the right road. The navigation metaphor is a variant of the road to wisdom metaphor that maintains the same basic structure, with a planned route to follow which includes risks and obstacles, and a set destination. The storms and winds might denote *Fortuna* or the *affectus*, and the port stands for wisdom:

> Unus est enim huius vitae fluctuantis et turbidae portus eventura contemnere, stare fidenter ac paratum tela fortunae adverso pectore excipere, non latitantem nec tergiversantem. (104.22)
>
> The only harbour safe from the seething storms of this life is scorn of the future, a firm stand, a readyness to receive Fortune's missiles full in the breast, neither skulking nor turning back.

The 'erring' theme, which was mentioned above, can also be tied to the navigation metaphor:

> [E]rrant consilia nostra, quia non habent quo derigantur. Ignoranti, quem portum petat, nullus suus ventus est. (71.3)
>
> Our plans miscarry because they have no aim. When a man does not know what harbour he is making for, no wind is the right wind.

In her monograph *Sapientiae Facies. Les Images de Sénèque,* Mireille Armissen-Marchetti discusses the force of the soul, 'la force de l'âme', in Seneca's works and concludes that expressions such as *vis animi* and *motus animi,* which connect strongly to the examples discussed above, are not to be considered as metaphors. Rather, they are literal descriptions of mental events according to the Stoic view of the human mind and the way it

functions.[95] Terms for bodily strength and movement can be used also for the mind. Armissen-Marchetti writes:

> [L]e vocabulaire que Sénèque emprunte à la force du corps pour décrire la force de l'âme ne relève donc pas de la transposition métaphorique; il ne fait que transcrire l'identité existant entre la dynamique des objets corporels et visibles et celle du psychisme.[96]

I agree with Armissen-Marchetti concerning the interpretation of the expressions she mentions. Other Latin phrases and words in the *Epistulae*, however, transfer physical force to a mental sphere in a metaphorical way. Mapped to the metaphor of the road to wisdom, it becomes obvious that the *affectus, i. e.* the powers of the soul in this context, are some of the major phenomena that threaten to draw the Stoic *proficiens* away from the ethical road or the road to wisdom. In the navigation metaphor, it is even more clear that the winds and streams can map on to mental forces as well as political change, diseases, or other events in an individual's private life. Different kinds of force are also acknowledged in modern linguistic research to be a 'master metaphor' for referring to emotions.[97]

We thus note the richness of the *iter ad sapientiam* metaphor in the *Epistulae* and how well it functions to describe the development of the Stoic. Seneca elaborates the metaphor by joining such aspects as erring, altitude, force, and travelling by sea to it and all these aspects are easily transferred to the target domain.

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[95] Armisen-Marchetti 1989, 209-210.

[96] Ibid., 209-210.

[97] Kövecses 2000, 192-199.

III

Seneca's use of the *iter ad sapientiam* metaphor offers interesting parallels – and differences – with the way he employs the metaphor of *iter vitae*, the 'journey of life'. The latter is also common in the *Epistulae*, and appears *e. g.* in 44.7:

> Nam cum summa vitae beatae sit solida securitas et eius inconcussa fiducia, sollicitudinis colligunt causas et per insidiosum *iter vitae* non tantum ferunt sarcinas, sed trahunt […](44.7)
>
> For although the sum and substance of the happy life is unalloyed freedom from care and the secret of such freedom is unshaken confidence, yet men gather together that which causes worry, and, while travelling life's treacherous road, not only have burdens to bear, but even draw burdens to themselves […]

The *sarcinae* seem to refer to both abstract burdens (worries, problems, and responsibilities) and unnecessary riches, which, as they have to be administrated, incommode the 'journey'.

On the difficult journey of life, it is quite natural sometimes to long for the end, Seneca claims. The end of the *via* of is of course death:

> Non est delicata res vivere. Longam viam ingressus es: et labaris oportet et arietes et cadas et lasseris et exclames: O mors! (107.2)
>
> Life is not a dainty business. You have started on a long journey; you are bound to slip, collide, fall, become weary, and cry out: O for death!

Just as he did when he used the *iter ad sapientiam* metaphor and spoke about the 'movement towards wisdom', the philosopher also avails himself of the navigation metaphor when he refers to life, and here, the harbour stands for death. We are fools if we see death as a threat, the philosopher asserts. Instead, it is the port we have longed for on our journey:

> Praenavigavimus, Lucili, vitam et quemadmodum in mari, ut ait Vergilius noster, 'Terrae urbesque recedunt', sic in hoc cursu rapidissimi temporis primum pueritiam abscondimus, deinde adulescentiam, deinde quidquid est illud inter iuvenem et senem

> medium, in utriusque confinio positum, deinde ipsius senectutis optimos annos. Novissime incipit ostendi publicus finis generis humani. Scopulum esse illum putamus dementissimi: portus est, aliquando petendus, nusquam recusandus (70.2-4)
>
> We have sailed past life, Lucilius, as if we were on a voyage, and just as when at sea, to quote from our poet Vergil, 'lands and towns are left astern', even so, on this journey where time flies with the greatest speed, we put below the horizon first our boyhood and then our youth, and then the space which lies between young manhood and middle age and borders on both, and next, the best years of old age itself. Last of all, we begin to sight the general bourne of the race of man. Fools that we are, we believe this bourne to be a dangerous reef; but it is the harbour, where we must some day put in, which we may never refuse to enter.

The theme of elevation and altitude, which, as we saw, correspond to a higher degree of wisdom in the *iter ad sapientiam* metaphor, also has a parallel in the metaphor of the 'journey of life': that of social promotion. Even if Seneca generally dissuades Lucilius from engaging himself too much in his career, the metaphor recurs in the *Epistulae*. In the following passage, social elevation is contrasted with philosophical elevation. Seneca emphasizes that the struggle to reach the heights of wisdom is different from the ladder of a conventional career and he uses a contradiction, 'venies ad summa per planum', to express this contrast:

> Quaecumque videntur eminere in rebus humanis, quamvis pusilla sint et comparatione humillimorum extent, per difficiles tamen et arduos tramites adeuntur. Confragosa in fastigium dignitatis via est; at si conscendere hunc verticem libet, cui se fortuna summisit, omnia quidem sub te, quae pro excelsissimis habentur aspicies, sed tamen venies ad summa per planum. (84.13)
>
> Whatever seems conspicuous in the eyes of men – however petty it may really be and prominent only by contrast with the lowest objects – is nevertheless approached by a difficult and toilsome pathway. It is a rough road that leads to the heights of greatness; but if you desire to scale this peak, which lies far above the range of Fortune, you will indeed look down from above upon all that men regard as most lofty, but none the less you can proceed to the top over level ground.

Unlike the elevation towards wisdom, the rise in social status often precedes a fall or degradation:

> Quotiens magna gratulatione excepta res gradum sibi struxit in praeceps et aliquem iam eminentem adlevavit etiamnunc, tamquam adhuc ibi staret unde tuto cadunt? (110.3)
>
> How often have privileges which we welcomed with deep thanksgiving built steps for themselves to the top of a precipice, still uplifting men who were already distinguished – just as if they had already stood in a position whence they could fall in safety!

We see the striking similarities between the *iter ad sapientiam* and the *iter vitae* metaphors. In the next section, I will try to analyse what this similarity means when we interpret Seneca's letters.

IV

So far, I have described two central metaphors in the *Epistulae*, the *iter ad sapientiam* and the *iter vitae*. There are differences and similarities between the two. Of course, they refer to different things: the former explains how to reach Stoic wisdom, the latter pictures human life in terms of a journey or movement forward. Another difference is that the *iter ad sapientiam* metaphor is Seneca's prescription for how life ought to be lived, while the *iter vitae* metaphor in many ways is a *de facto* description of life. In Seneca's view, the two roads might converge – if a person's life is lived in an ideal Stoic way, because that would mean that the *iter vitae* becomes identical with the *iter ad sapientiam*. This is one reason why it is easy to confuse the two metaphors, and they are indeed identical when we talk of the ideal Stoic *iter vitae*. It is probable that Seneca did not always consider it necessary to make a clear distinction between the two.

We also notice that the two metaphors are elaborated in similar ways. Seneca avails himself of the aspects of altitude and elevation, which in the *iter ad sapientiam* metaphor means attaining higher degrees of wisdom but in

the iter *vitae metaphor* primarily refers to social and economical promotion. Seneca also utilizes travelling by sea as a source domain in both metaphors.

The greatest similarity between the *iter ad sapientiam* and the *iter vitae* metaphors, however, and one that affects the interpretation of them, is that they have the same basic structure. They both consist of the idea of movement towards a goal, which we might depict with a simple image schema:

Figure 1: The similar, basic structure in the *iter ad sapientiam* and the *iter vitae* metaphors.

Wisdom is the goal of the *iter ad sapientiam* metaphor and the *iter vitae* metaphor has death as its goal or end. In his book *Mappings in Thought and Language*, Gilles Fauconnier proposes that two input spaces in a linguistic context can be united into a third, which contains the information in both the two input spaces and combines this information in a new way. This third space Fauconnier calls a *blend*.[98] In the context we have here, the *iter ad sapientiam* metaphor and the *iter vitae* metaphor function as two input spaces. Together they form a *blend*, which has the structure of figure 1 above. What is new in the blend is that wisdom and death are identified with each other – they are placed in the same spot. The similarity between the two metaphors makes it inevitable for the reader to identify wisdom and death. Seneca's recurring insistence on life and the human body as a prison for the soul is another reason why this identification lies close at hand. In the following quotation, Seneca speaks of the wise man's ability to liberate himself from the chains of the body by studying philosophy:

[98] Fauconnier 1997, 149-171.

> [I]sta enim omnia [sc. quaestiones philosophiae], si non concidantur nec in hanc subtilitatem inutilem distrahantur, attollunt et levant animum, qui gravi sarcina pressus explicari cupit et reverti ad illa quorum fuit. Nam corpus hoc animi pondus ac poena est; premente illo urguetur, in vinclis est, nisi accessit philosophia et illum respirare rerum naturae spectaculo iussit et a terrenis ad divina dimisit. (65.16)
>
> For all these questions, provided that they are not cut up and pulled apart into useless subtleties, elevate and lift the soul, which is pressed down by a heavy burden and desires to be freed and to return to that from which it derives. For the body is a weight and a penance for the soul. The soul is pressed down and in chains unless philosophy has come to its help, ordered it to take fresh courage by contemplating the universe and send it off from earthly to divine things.

It seems as if Seneca is making the point that wisdom is achieved when the soul leaves the body, whether this happens by suicide or by natural death. But the philosopher also has another point to make: that clinging to uncompromising Stoic ethics is necessary if one wants to reach the state of wisdom. Another reason why the two metaphors form a blend is Seneca's main *exemplum* of Cato the Younger, who committed suicide because he refused to compromise with his principles. In a hopeless situation, Cato saw suicide as the only way to preserve his dignity:

> Quidni ego narrem [Catonem] ultima illa nocte Platonem librum legentem posito ad caput gladio? Duo haec in rebus extremis instrumenta prospexerat, alterum ut vellet mori, alterum ut posset. Compositis ergo rebus, utcumque componi fractae atque ultima poterant, id agendum existimavit ne cui Catonem aut occidere liceret aut servare contingeret. (24.6)
>
> But why should I not tell you about Cato, how he read Plato's book on that last night, with a sword laid by his head? He had provided these two requisites for his last moments, – the first, that he might have the will to die, and the second, that he might have the means. So he put his affairs in order, – as well as one could put in order that which was ruined and near its end, – and thought that he ought to see to it that no one should have the power to slay or the good fortune to save Cato.

The fact that Seneca returns to the example of Cato so many times gives him an extraordinary role in the *Letters*. Cato functions as a model. Seneca's point

seems to be that wisdom is never far away for the Stoic disciple, if he just acts with courage and according to high principles. Even suicide, if it is deemed necessary in a desperate situation, is a way for the Stoic of staying true to his doctrine. The 'road of life' can be voluntarily shortened, but the goal is reached anyway, if the Stoic has acted bravely. The *blend* of the *iter vitae* and the *iter ad sapientiam* metaphors expresses Seneca's view of these questions, although this happens in a subtle and partly hidden way. I therefore argue against Lavery's line of reasoning that was quoted in the beginning of this chapter. The structure of the *iter vitae* metaphor is not destroyed by Seneca's view of suicide. The philosopher's argumentation is logical from his point of view because wisdom is always near at hand for the Stoic if he maintains the right attitude towards life.

Conclusion of chapter 3

In this chapter I have demonstrated that Seneca uses two closely related metaphors in the *Epistulae*, that of the journey towards wisdom and that of the journey of life. Both these metaphors, especially the former, are richly elaborated in the work. The similarities between them make them interact with each other, especially in the way that wisdom and death come close to each other in meaning. This connection has consequences for how the metaphors ought to be interpreted: if the Stoic follows his principles, he has indeed reached the desired state of wisdom. The road of life need not be followed until it ends in natural death; if life offers no possibility to preserve one's dignity, suicide is an acceptable way of letting the soul return to its heavenly home. More importantly, however, Seneca seems to stress that for the courageous person, wisdom is always close at hand. If one acts in the right way, one's soul is already at home, and one has nothing to fear.

4. General Conclusion

In this study, I have argued that we should look at the metaphors in Seneca's *Epistulae* not so much as isolated units but as figures of thought that need to be interpreted in relation to each other.

In chapter one, I discussed the body-soul metaphor and demonstrated that it is an integral part of the *Epistulae* and that it unites other categories of metaphors – metaphors that involve different aspects of the human body – diseases, movement in an area and a landscape, and hand-to-hand fighting – as source domains. My study shows that it is possible to group the metaphors in other categories than has been done earlier (Smith, Steyns, Tietze, Armissen-Marchetti), by showing how the use of the human body as a metaphorical source domain can be expanded in several ways. The human body becomes an excellent instrument for Seneca when employed by the philosopher as a source domain for referring to the human soul. The pattern that is shown in chapter one can be explained partly by the great number of expressions and double connotations of many verbs and nouns in the Latin of Seneca's time, but Seneca's special focus on the philosophical development of the human soul makes this metaphor especially rich in meaning in the *Epistulae*. The fact that Seneca dwells so much on the theme of philosophical and mental development – it is the central theme of the *Epistulae* – contributes to making the body-soul metaphor indispensable in the work. Only when the body-soul metaphor is expanded in this way do we see its central function in the *Epistulae*: it is tied to the central theme of the work, namely the personal, philosophical development of Seneca, of Lucilius, and of every reader of the letters.

In chapter two, it was demonstrated that Seneca's metaphor of the 'wall around the soul' is closely related to other groups of metaphors in the *Epistulae* – those of currency, theatre, and slavery. These groups of metaphors express in different ways the Stoic ideal of independence from the

outer world. Taken one by one, they are banal, but together they describe this ideal in its full complexity. The many-faceted nature of the threats to the Stoic's soul adds even more layers of meaning to the metaphors in question. One needs to weigh these metaphors together when one interprets them. It is obvious that Seneca, rather than conveying the superficial messages inherent in the single metaphors, intends to create an *attitude* in Lucilius and in the readers of the *Letters* by describing the enclosed space of the ideal Stoic's soul in so many different ways.

In chapter three, I examined the close relation between the *iter ad sapientiam* and *the iter vitae* metaphors. Seneca elaborates these metaphors in similar ways, and it is possible that he does not always make a clear distinction between the two, especially since they converge when he speaks about a life lived in an ideal manner. More interesting, however, is the *blend* that is created by the similar structure of the two metaphors. Death and wisdom are identified with each other, or almost so, and this view is accentuated by several other themes in the *Letters*, *e. g.* Seneca's panegyric of Cato and the statement that the body is a prison for the soul. The meaning that emerges when we interpret the two metaphors together is clear: the Stoic, as long as he does not compromise with his ethics, has nothing to fear. He even has the right to commit suicide and let his soul go home to the gods. In fact, as long as the Stoic lives in the right way, he is already among the gods, whether he is dead or alive.

The coherence of the imagery has not been taken into account enough in earlier research on Seneca's prose. The metaphors and similes acquire their meaning when they are analysed together and in relation to each other.

As I discussed in the introduction, it has often been claimed that the purpose of Seneca's imagery is to bring his readers 'in rem praesentem', to connect philosophical ideas with the practical, everyday experiences that the readers have. However, I would like to argue that the main purpose of the imagery is to add nuances and complexity to the general philosophical statements that Seneca makes. The drastic statements that a Stoic ought to be independent from everything outside himself, that life is military service and that vices are diseases of the soul are part of his straightforward, literary style. But so is the imagery, which over and over again demonstrates to the reader that the philosophers teaching and message are subtle rather than

drastic. Metaphors and similes that refer to partly similar, partly contradictory things are mixed together in order to express how a learning Stoic can better himself. Because the metaphors and similes with related themes are so many, they acquire a nuance of trial and error; they are attempts to describe how one might approach – with very small and tentative steps – the idea and the ideal of the perfect Stoic sage.

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