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CAMBRIDGE TEXTS IN THE HISTORY OF POLITICAL THOUGHT

塞涅卡道德和 政治论文集

Seneca

*Moral and
Political Essays*

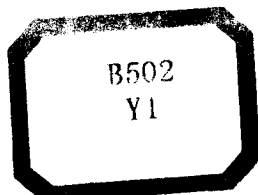
Edited by

JOHN M. COOPER

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SENECA
Moral and Political Essays

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The writings of Lucius Annaeus Seneca, tutor and political advisor to the young emperor Nero, are among our most important sources for Stoic philosophy. This volume offers, in clear and forceful contemporary translations, four of Seneca's most interesting 'Moral Essays': *On Anger*, *On Mercy*, *On the Private Life* and the first four books of *On Favours*. They provide an attractive insight into the social and moral outlook of a Stoic thinker at the centre of power in the Roman empire of the mid first century AD. A General Introduction on Seneca's life and work explains the fundamental ideas in the philosophy that informs the essays. Individual introductions place the works in their specific historical and intellectual contexts. Biographical Notes, based on up-to-date scholarship, provide the information necessary for a full understanding of the texts. To assist the student further, section headings have been inserted into the translations to mark the principal transitions in the argument and reveal the organization of these writings.

剑桥政治思想史原著系列

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在政治理论领域，“剑桥政治思想史原著系列”作为主要的学生教科丛书，如今已牢固确立了其地位。本丛书旨在使学生能够获得从古希腊到 20 世纪初期西方政治思想史方面所有最为重要的原著。它囊括了所有著名的经典原著，但与此同时，它又扩展了传统的评价尺度，以便能够纳入范围广泛、不那么出名的作品。而在此之前，这些作品中有许多从未有过现代英文版本可资利用。只要可能，所选原著都会以完整而不删节的形式出版，其中的译作则是专门为本丛书的目的而安排。每一本书都有一个评论性的导言，加上历史年表、生平梗概、进一步阅读指南，以及必要的词汇表和原文注解。本丛书的最终目的是，为西方政治思想的整个发展脉络提供一个清晰的轮廓。

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HISTORY OF POLITICAL THOUGHT

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Editors' Notes

The initial work on this volume was divided as follows. The General Introduction (apart from the pages on 'Style and Composition'), the Special Introductions and the notes to *On the Private Life* and *On Favours* were first drafted by J. M. Cooper. The translations (with the addition of section headings to clarify the course of Seneca's argument), the Biographical Notes and the annotations to *On Anger* and *On Mercy* began as the work of J. F. Procopé. But each author has revised and amplified the work of the other to the point where neither can be held solely responsible, or escape responsibility, for any part of the book.

Numerous debts have to be acknowledged. J. M. Cooper would like to thank Kathleen Much, Alexander Nehamas and J. B. Schneewind. J. F. Procopé would like to thank Robert Coleman, John Crook, Richard Duncan-Jones, Brad Inwood, Caroline Moore, Michael Reeve, Malcolm Schofield and Edward Shils. J. M. Cooper would also like to acknowledge the hospitality of the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioural Sciences and the financial support, while he was a Fellow there, of the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

Note on the text

The manuscript transmission of the works in this volume is varied. For a good summary, see L. D. Reynolds ed., *Texts and Transmission: A Survey of the Latin Classics* (Oxford 1983), pp. 363-9. Our principal manuscript for *On Anger* and the other *Dialogi* is the

Ambrosiana (A), written at Montecassino near Naples between AD 1058 and 1087 and preserved in the Ambrosian Library in Milan; for *On Mercy* and *On Favours* the main text is the *codex Nazarianus* (N) written in north Italy around AD 800 and now in the Vatican Library. The transmission of *On Mercy* has been notably worse than that of the other essays translated here.

Except where stated in the footnotes, our translations of *On Anger* and *On the Private Life* are of the text in *Senecae Dialogi*, ed. L. D. Reynolds (Oxford 1977). Those of *On Mercy* and *On Favours* follow that of C. Hosius' Teubner edition (Leipzig 1914), reprinted by J. W. Basore in his Loeb Classical Library edition of *Seneca: Moral Essays* I (1928) and III (1935), and are indebted further to the Budé editions of F. Préchac (*Sénèque: De la clémence* 3rd edn (Paris 1967), and *Sénèque: Des bienfaits* 3rd edn (Paris 1972)). These modern editions rest on the work of numerous earlier scholars, from Erasmus onwards, some of whose readings and comments are mentioned in our footnotes. For the most part, a variant reading will simply be attributed to its author (e.g. Gronovius, Vahlen, Gertz, Koch, Sonntag, Kronenberg) without further references. Special mention should, however, be made here to three scholars whose work will be cited repeatedly: W. H. Alexander (*Seneca's De Beneficiis Libri VII* (University of California Press, Classical Philology 1950), a monograph which continues the work of two earlier articles, 'Notes on the *De beneficiis* of Seneca' (*Classical Quarterly* 28 (1934) pp. 54 f.) and 'Further Notes on the Text of Seneca's *De beneficiis*' (*Classical Quarterly* 31 (1937) pp. 55-9; J. Calvin ('Calvin's commentary on Seneca's *De Clementia*', with Introduction, Translation and Notes by F. L. Battles and A. M. Hugo (Leiden 1969)); and J. Lipsius (cited from *L. Annaei Senecae opera quae extant, integris Justi Lipsii, J. Fred. Gronovii, et selectis Variorum Commentariis illustrata* (Amsterdam 1672)).

General introduction

Seneca: life, public career and authorship

Seneca is the principal ancient proponent in Latin of Stoic philosophy. His surviving *Moral Essays*, the more political of which have been selected for this volume, are the most important body of more or less complete Stoic writings to survive from antiquity. He was born Lucius Annaeus Seneca between about 4 and 1 BC in southern Spain, at Corduba (modern Cordoba), a leading provincial centre of Roman culture. His parents had also been born in Spain, though their families were of Italian origin. They belonged to the equestrian order, a section of the Roman upper class that, unlike the senatorial families, had traditionally avoided political careers in favour of commerce and the pursuit of wealth. Seneca's father, likewise named Lucius Annaeus Seneca, had spent much of his adult life in Rome. As a young man he had interested himself in oratory, attending the disputations and rhetorical exercises of the leading declaimers there. Leaving his wife in charge of his estates in Spain, he later returned to Rome to oversee the education and subsequent careers of his three sons. As well as a history of Rome from the civil wars of the mid first century BC down to the 30s AD, which has not survived and may never have been published, the elder Seneca produced reports and commentaries on the performances he had witnessed in the rhetorical schools of Rome as a youth. Written near the end of his life at his sons' request, these have partly survived, as the so-called *Controversiae* and *Suasoriae*.¹

¹ Available in the Loeb Classical Library in translations by M. Winterbottom. For more about the elder Seneca's life, see Griffin, pp. 29-34.

We have little information about the younger Seneca's life until he was well into his thirties. He was brought up and educated in Rome. His father, intending that he, like his older brother Annaeus Novatus, should pursue a political career, put him into contact with the leading practitioners of oratory at Rome. The effects of this training are much in evidence in his *Essays*. Philosophical in subject-matter, they are a product in style and composition of Roman rhetoric. But the younger Seneca also received extensive instruction in philosophy, again at Rome; he never went to Athens to study it. Several times in his *Moral Letters to Lucilius*,² written in the last years of his life, he refers with feeling to his early teachers of philosophy and their profound effect upon him: Sotion, a Greek from Alexandria, of uncertain philosophical allegiance; Attalus, a Stoic perhaps from Pergamum in Asia Minor; and Papirius Fabianus, formerly an orator, who had studied in the school of the famous and very Roman philosopher Quintus Sextius.³ Regrettably, Seneca tells us little about what he heard in their lectures or read under their guidance, but it must have been at this time that he formed his life-long attachment to Stoic philosophy and began to acquire the extensive knowledge of Stoic writings that he was to display in his own works.

Seneca speaks often in the *Letters* of his frail health in youth and later on. He seems to have spent some time, in his twenties or early thirties, recuperating from tuberculosis in Egypt, under the care of his mother's sister (her husband was 'prefect' or administrative head of the Roman military government there). Not till some time after his return from Egypt in the year 31 (when he was between thirty-two and thirty-six years old) did he take firm steps towards the political career his father had intended for him. Thanks to his aunt's influence, he was appointed to his first magistracy, that of quaestor or financial officer, and was enrolled in the Senate, probably under the emperor Tiberius (who died in 37). By the end of the decade he was well known and highly regarded at Rome as an orator. Tiberius' successor, Caligula (emperor from 37 to 41), is reported by Suetonius (*Life of Caligula*

² See especially *Letters* 100 (on Papirius Fabianus) and 108 (on Sotion and Attalus).

³ Seneca was deeply impressed by Sextius' writings which were in Greek (we know almost nothing about them), describing him as in effect a Stoic, though he says Sextius himself denied it (*Letter* 64. 2).

53) to have been offended by his successes, so much so that, according to a somewhat improbable story told by the third-century historian Dio Cassius, only Seneca's tubercular condition saved him from a death-sentence. (He was going to die soon anyway, it was said.) We have unfortunately no evidence about Seneca's literary or philosophical work before or at this time: with the sole exception of the *Consolation to Marcia*, all the surviving works seem certainly to date from after Seneca's banishment to Corsica in 41.⁴

In January 41, Caligula was murdered. His uncle Claudius ascended the throne. Later that year, probably in the autumn, Seneca was accused of adultery with one of Caligula's sisters, tried before the Senate in the presence of the emperor, convicted and actually sentenced to death. The emperor spared his life, banishing him instead to the dismal island of Corsica,⁵ where he languished for eight years. In 49, Claudius married Caligula's only surviving sister, Agrippina, who promptly arranged to have Seneca recalled and even appointed to a praetorship, the office immediately below that of consul. He was then between fifty and fifty-four years old. According to the historian Tacitus (*Annals* xii 8), Agrippina thought that Seneca's rehabilitation would have popular appeal, on account of his literary eminence. He was already known as an outstanding orator, poet and writer of philosophical treatises.⁶

But Agrippina had other motives. She hoped to insert her twelve-year-old son, the future emperor Nero, into the line of succession above Claudius' own son, Britannicus, who was several years younger. (Her plans came to fruition when, in the following year, Claudius adopted Nero, making him thus his eldest son.) In return

⁴ The preceding two paragraphs are based, in the main, on the account in Griffin, pp. 34-59 and 397, which may be consulted for details and documentation.

⁵ In his *Consolation to his Mother Helvia* (6. 5, 7. 8-9, 9. 1), written to console his mother in her grief for the disgrace and deprivations of his exile, Seneca describes the island as a 'barren and thorny rock' (7. 9), afflicted by a harsh climate and provided neither with rivers nor harbours by the sea.

⁶ He seems to have devoted his exile to literary pursuits. He claims as much in his *Consolation to his Mother Helvia*, (1. 2, 20. 1-2). In Corsica, he also published a third consolation, the *Consolation to Polybius* (a disguised petition to be allowed home), as well as writing much, perhaps all, of *On Anger*. It seems reasonable to suppose that his (lost) *Life* of his father was also written then, and that some of his poetry (epigrams, conceivably some of his tragedies) had appeared by the time of his recall. So Tacitus' account of Agrippina's motives has something to be said for it, though he bulk of Seneca's surviving philosophical writings were written after his return from exile.

for her help in arranging his recall, Seneca accepted overall responsibility for Nero's education. Thus began a long and fateful involvement in the imperial household. Seneca's responsibilities as 'tutor' did not include instruction in philosophy: according to Suetonius (*Life of Nero* 52), Agrippina thought this an unsuitable subject for an intended emperor and forbade its inclusion in the curriculum. Even in later years, when the ban no longer applied, Nero found other instructors in philosophy, and did not turn – at least, not formally – to him for tuition. It was as a teacher of rhetoric that Seneca contributed directly to the prince's formal education. But he was also expected to offer moral instruction and general guidance in practical politics, and here his Stoic outlook would come into prominence. It was in this capacity that, shortly after Nero's accession to the throne in 54, Seneca addressed to him a Stoic 'mirror of princes', his *On Mercy*.

Nero became emperor at the age of not quite seventeen. For a number of years, Seneca was his principal adviser behind the scenes, writing his speeches and exercising influence in imperial appointments.⁷ He and his ally Burrus, the able and upright prefect of the Pretorian Guard, are given the credit by Tacitus (*Annals* XIII 2 4–5) for the decent restraint and effectiveness of the imperial government in the early years of Nero's reign. But Seneca's functions were not formal or official, and it is very difficult to give any detailed account of how the official acts of the emperor reflected his policies or advice. With the death of Agrippina in 59 (she was murdered on Nero's orders), his influence and that of Burrus declined sharply; it soon became clear that Nero had relied on them largely in order to resist his mother's attempts at domination. With Agrippina out of the way, his wilfulness, self-indulgence and murderous inclinations came rapidly to the fore. No one was any longer in a position to check him, or even to moderate his excesses. Already in 55, when the influence of Seneca and Burrus was at its height, he had arranged for the thirteen-year-old Britannicus, whom he feared as a threat to his throne, to be poisoned at a family banquet before his very eyes. By the time Burrus himself died in 62, it was clear to Seneca that he had no further useful

⁷ Seneca himself was suffect consul (a consul appointed for a couple of months to fill out the term of one of the 'ordinary' consuls) in 55 or 56. His brother Annaeus Novatus had received the same honour in the year before.

role to play, and no effective power. He asked for leave to retire. The emperor refused – it would look bad if Seneca distanced himself. But though appearances were kept up, from that time onwards he no longer functioned as Nero's adviser and agent. He absented himself from the city much of the time. Two years later, he renewed his request. Nero granted it, accepting back from him much of the vast wealth which Seneca had amassed in his service. In the following year, however, in 65, Seneca was denounced for involvement in a widely spread plot – his nephew, the poet Lucan, seems in fact to have been one of the principal co-conspirators. Seneca was questioned, and then given the emperor's order to commit suicide, which he did by opening his veins.⁸

The bulk of Seneca's surviving philosophical writings were written after his return from exile in 49,⁹ in the period of his association with the imperial household and in the relatively brief retirement (62–5) that followed it. The 124 so-called *Moral Letters to Lucilius* and the seven books of 'Investigations into Nature' (*Naturales Quaestiones*), also addressed to Lucilius,¹⁰ date from this final retirement. Of the texts translated in this volume, *On Favours* had not been completed by then. Against that, *On Anger*, most of it probably written during or even before Seneca's exile, was finished before 52; *On Mercy* was composed in 55 or 56, early in the reign of Nero to whom it is dedicated; while *On the Private Life*, though its date is uncertain, must be later than 48 and is almost certainly

⁸ In Tacitus' extended account of Seneca's accusation and death (*Annals* xv 60–4), his manner of dying was clearly modelled on that of Socrates as portrayed by Plato in the *Phaedo*. Seneca even took a supplementary dose of hemlock, but too late for it to have any effect (64. 3). According to Tacitus, Nero had no proof of Seneca's complicity in the plot, and had already attempted to poison him a year earlier (xv 45). A judicious and complete discussion of this and the other ancient evidence for Seneca's final years can be found in Griffin, pp. 66–128.

⁹ Many scholars suppose that his tragedies belong to this same time, having mostly been written during the decade of the 50s. Tacitus (*Annals* xiv 52) connects Seneca's writing of tragedies with Nero's interest in the genre. See discussion and references in M. Schanz and C. Hosius, *Geschichte der Römischen Literatur* (Munich, 1935), pt 2, pp. 456–59. Other scholars maintain that the tragedies were largely composed during the Corsican exile, 41–9; see P. Grimal, *Sénèque* (Paris 1981, in the collection *Que sais-je?*), p. 427.

¹⁰ This Lucilius was an old friend of Seneca's, about the same age, of the equestrian order from Pompeii near Naples. He wrote poetry and philosophical prose, while also working in the imperial government in Sicily and elsewhere. See Griffin, p. 91, for details and references.

earlier than 63, the year in which its presumed dedicatee, Serenus, probably died. Works of Stoic philosophical theory, the four texts presented here reflect in places their author's familiarity at the highest level with the politics of imperial Rome. How far this familiarity affected what he has to say in them, his readers must judge for themselves.

Seneca and Stoic philosophy

The Stoic school of philosophy had been founded in Athens, three centuries before Seneca's birth, by *Zeno of Citium* (335–263 BC). Zeno's teachings were refined and elaborated by his successors, most notably by *Chrysippus of Soli* (c. 280–207 BC). Indeed, 'Stoicism' was generally understood as the system bequeathed by Chrysippus. Thoroughly absorbed by Seneca, it lies at the heart of the essays in this volume.

Seneca counts as a late, Roman Stoic. Scholars customarily distinguish three principal periods in the history of the school. To the 'Old Stoa' at Athens belongs the original formation of the doctrines of the school and their organization into a teachable, complete system of philosophy, comprising logic, epistemology, theory of nature, ethics and politics. In the third and second centuries BC, these underwent progressive reformulation and defence – first by Chrysippus, then by *Diogenes of Babylon* (c. 240–152 BC) and his successor *Antipater of Tarsus* (died before 137 BC) – against attacks by the Academic sceptics, *Arcesilaus* (316/5–242/1 BC) and *Carneades* (214/3–129/8 BC). Next, the 'Middle Stoa' (c. 150–50 BC), under *Panaetius* (c. 185–109 BC) and his pupils *Posidonius* (c. 135–51/50 BC) and *Hecaton* (c. 100 BC), with its centres of activity still in Greece (at Athens and Rhodes), produced various innovations. Finally, with Seneca and then *Musonius Rufus* (c. AD 30–100), *Epictetus* (c. AD 55–135) and *Marcus Aurelius* (AD 121–180) (all three of whom, however, wrote in Greek, not Latin), the 'Roman Stoa', addressing Romans within the ambit of Rome itself, offers a somewhat popularized Stoic 'philosophy of life'.

Scholars have sometimes seen departures from scholastic rigour and orthodoxy in the Middle and Roman periods, but these have been much exaggerated. Seneca and the other later authors have not in fact abandoned any essential point of traditional Stoic ethics,

psychology, theology or natural philosophy. But they do take up new topics and introduce new focuses of attention. The original Stoic theorists, for example, had spent much effort describing the state of mind and way of life of the perfect, fully 'virtuous' human being, the 'wise man.' Seneca, following the example of Panaetius, asks instead how people who are not fully virtuous and know they are never going to be, but seriously wish to live as well as they possibly can, should organize their lives. Again, instead of writing technical philosophical treatises, contributions to debate on disputed questions with other philosophical experts, he prefers to expound to the intelligent general reader the theory of Stoicism and its application to his – or her¹¹ – life. Seneca's philosophical works are all oriented to questions of practical ethics; about logic, physical theory, epistemology and metaphysics he has little to say. Even his *Investigations into Nature* regularly stress, in the Prefaces and elsewhere, the moral edification to be derived from their subject. On all fundamental questions, however, especially those of moral philosophy, his starting-point is a firm commitment to the orthodox positions of Zeno and Chrysippus. He develops his own thought with impressive independence, but always on the basis of their philosophical system.

Here a brief account of that system may prove helpful.¹² Following Plato in the *Timaeus*, the Stoics thought that the world, with the earth at its centre and the 'sphere' of the fixed stars at its circumference, is a single living, rational animal.¹³ They identified this 'world-animal' with the god of the universe, that is with Zeus (Roman Jupiter). Its body is Zeus's body; its mind, directing its

¹¹ Two of the *Essays* (the *Consolation to Marcia* and the *Consolation to his Mother Helvia*) are in fact addressed to women. At the same time, Seneca was no more concerned than any other ancient writer with 'gender-neutral' language. He always speaks of the 'wise man', meaning nothing more specific than 'wise human-being', and he automatically treats moral agents as masculine.

¹² The following is a brief account of the Stoic world-view and ethical theory, presupposed rather than expounded by Seneca in the works included in this volume. See the passages collected in Long-Sedley, Chapters 46–7, 53–5, 57–63. Cicero's *On Ends* III contains a good general treatment of Stoic ethics, philosophy of action and political theory.

¹³ For the Stoics, the universe is limited to this single world. The Epicureans, on the other hand, held that ours is only one of infinitely many worlds situated in an infinity of space (Epicurus, *Letter to Herodotus* 45 = Long-Sedley 1A). See *On Favours* IV 19.