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SENECA'S CONCEPT OF A SUPREME BEING  
IN HIS PHILOSOPHICAL ESSAYS  
AND LETTERS

BY

ROBERT J. KOEHN, S.J.

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT  
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR A MASTER OF  
ARTS DEGREE IN THE CLASSICS

AUGUST

1947

### VITA AUCTORIS

Robert James Koehn was born in Toledo, Ohio, on September 2, 1917. After attending St. James parochial school, he entered St. John's High School in September 1931. Upon his graduation in 1935 he attended St. John's and DeSales Colleges before entering the Society of Jesus on September 1, 1937.

He matriculated at Xavier University, Cincinnati, and received a Bachelor of Literature degree in June 1941. Following his transfer to West Baden College, West Baden Springs, Indiana, in the summer of 1941, he entered the graduate school of Loyola University, Chicago, in the Classics.

During three years of philosophical studies at West Baden(1941-44) and three years of teaching at St. Ignatius High School, Chicago(1944-47), he fulfilled the requirements for the Master of Arts degree in the classical language course.

## PREFACE

The present thesis is concerned primarily with the words Seneca uses to specify his Supreme Being. With this purpose in view it was necessary to use at very frequent intervals, especially in Chapter Four, quotations from Seneca's works. To retain the Latin feeling and shades of meaning contained in the Latin wording Seneca's direct words were inserted as much as possible. This was done even within the course of an English sentence when it was felt the Latin flavor would be lost in the transfer to the English. Also, since Seneca's works were used very freely, abbreviations of the various titles were used in the many footnotes. To assist the reader who might not be well acquainted with Seneca's works we hereby insert a key to the essays and letters employed in this thesis.

Ad Helviam de Consolatione	Ad Helv.
Ad Marciam de Consolatione	Ad Marc.
Ad Polybium de Consolatione	Ad Polyb.
De Beneficiis	De Ben.
De Brevitate Vitae	De Brev. V.
De Clementia	De Clem.
De Constantia Sapientis	De Constant.
De Ira	De Ira
De Otio Sapientis	De Otio
De Providentia	De Prov.
De Vita Beata	De V. B.
Epistulae Morales	Ep. Mor.
Quaestiones Naturales	Quaest. Nat.

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## CHAPTER I

### THE CASE PRESENTED

The life and writings of Lucius Annaeus Seneca have interested, puzzled, and intrigued mankind all during his life and ever since his death. There certainly was no philosopher of his period who could equal him in seriousness of thought and no statesman who had run the gamut of success and failure in public office and imperial favor more completely than he.

As a philosopher Seneca launched out into no unplumbed depths of metaphysics or ethics. His was the desire to utilize principles already recognized and to instil in men a love of philosophy and the wisdom for which it taught men to strive. For him Philosophy was simply an attempt to reach wisdom,<sup>1</sup> which he called the Summum Bonum of the human mind. And the Summum Bonum viewed practically for him was quod honestum est.<sup>2</sup> This thought recurs again and again as the theme around which all his letters and philosophical essays are centered. It must be admitted that it was a theme well worthy of any man's pen. And to say that Seneca ably fulfilled the task he set for himself would be to belabor the obvious.

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1 Richard Gummere, ed. and transl., Seneca: Epistulae Morales, London, William Heinemann, 1934, 89.4

2 Ep. Mor. 71.4

However, as Tacitus was to remark some years later, in those days of the Empire it was better to be without ability than to come to the attention of the ruler. And Seneca was one who by the grace of his talents and the entangling web of circumstances only too often and forcibly came under the scheming eye of a Caligula or a Nero. It is not our intention to vindicate Seneca's character as Tacitus appears to do or to drop sly hints of adultery<sup>3</sup> or usury as Dio Cassius<sup>3</sup> and Juvenal<sup>4</sup> intend. Seneca's life may have stood in open contradiction to his elevated doctrine. Still, J. Wight Duff for one, while giving us a rather exhaustive list of Seneca's supposed weaknesses and improprieties, seems to think that he is innocent.

The story of improper relations with Julia so obviously served Messalina's machinations that it cannot be accepted as incontrovertible fact, while the suggestion of an amour with Agrippina is even more incredible. That Seneca was privy to deaths of Claudius, of Britannicus and of Agrippina was whispered and repeated, but the rumours can be neither proved or disproved. His weak condonation of such deeds very naturally subjects him to suspicion. That he advocated the contempt of wealth and yet accumulated it, is not to be gainsaid; even so, and granted that he lent money on interest, we are not bound to believe Dio's statement that Seneca caused an insurrection in Britain by suddenly calling in the huge sum of forty million sesterces.<sup>5</sup>

However, all these things, even though they were true, would not lessen the importance or value of his thoughts and teachings. For the "power of Seneca as a moral teacher has, with some reservations, been recognized by all the ages since his

3 Edward Cary, ed. and transl., Dio Cassius: Roman History, London, William Heinemann, 1929, 61.10

4 Charles Anthon, ed., The Satires of Juvenal and Persius, New York, Harper Bros., 1879, 8.212

5 J. Wight Duff, A Literary History of Rome in the Silver Age, New York, Chas. Scribner's Sons, 1935, 204

time."<sup>6</sup> And "Seneca, like Tacitus, has a remarkable power of moral diagnosis."<sup>7</sup> It is Seneca the teacher of moral doctrine that we seek. It matters not whether this belief coincides with his deeds. Besides, many Christians under more favorable circumstances and with far greater graces have failed to maintain the standard of life that they by their very name profess to follow.

One historian abstracts for a moment from the actual content of Seneca's doctrine and the conduct of his life just to consider him as the completest specimen of the professed philosopher of antiquity.

He was neither a statesman who indulged in moral speculation, like Cicero, nor a private citizen who detached himself, like Epicurus or Zeno, from the ordinary duties of life, to devote himself to the pursuit of abstract truth. To teach and preach philosophy in writing, in talking, in his daily life and conversation, was, indeed, the main object he professed; but he regarded all public careers as practical developments of moral science, and plumed himself on showing that thought may in every case be combined with action.<sup>8</sup>

Seneca, therefore, as this man well states, aims "to teach and preach philosophy." Throughout the course of his essays and letters he does not let himself or his reader forget the end he has in mind. This is one point in which Seneca does maintain the greatest coherency and consistency. It mattered not whether he spoke De Providentia or Ad Helviam de Consolatione.

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6 Samuel Dill, Roman Society From Nero to Marcus Aurelius, London, Macmillan and Co., 1920, 7

7 Dill, 9

8 Charles Merivale, History of the Romans under the Empire, New York, Longmans Green and Co., 1904, 8.269



The general aim of the essay and the tenor of the doctrine remained the same. His "secundum naturam vivere" and "ad illius legem exemplumque formari sapientia est"<sup>9</sup> sum up his entire philosophy. And to this one idea he has held firm in each succeeding essay.

Philosophy for Seneca was not an organized division of investigation into cosmology, logic, and other philosophical branches. His philosophy was only ethics, the study of morality, quod honestum est. But yet, Seneca went far above the level of honestum and turpe to ascend to the height of perfection and asceticism. It might sound strange to speak of an ancient and pagan ascetic, but some have labelled Seneca just that. "Whatever may be thought of his excellencies or defects as a writer, or of the caricature and priggishness of the Stoic sect, he was in his writings an earnest, a highly pretending, and apparently a sincere advocate of ascetic severity."<sup>10</sup> And in this special field of philosophy, in which he preordained himself to labor under the aegis of Zeno, Seneca "was the principal ornament of Stoicism in his day, and a valuable instructor of mankind."<sup>11</sup>

Mention has been made on several occasions, sometimes

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9 John W. Basore, ed. and transl., Seneca: Moral Essays, LONDON, William Heinemann, 1928, De Vita Beata 3.2

10 Benjamin H. Malkin, Classical Disquisitions, London, Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, Brown, and Green, 1825, 295

11 Malkin, 296

directly, sometimes implicitly, that Seneca followed the Stoic doctrines. Stoicism, it is surely plain, was the general "system" followed by Seneca, but whether he was consistent with this plan as proposed by Zeno, and advanced by Cleanthes and Chrysippus in his concept of a Supreme Being, is just the point under discussion in this thesis. It is well known that many writers, judging superficially from Seneca's general aim of ἀπαθεία and the supremacy of Reason over Fate, which are decidedly Stoic proposals, wish to classify him immediately and in all things as a Stoic. Others, however, seeing such beautiful expressions as "cogitas quanta nobis tribuerit parens noster"<sup>12</sup> and "patrium deus habet adversus bonos viros animum et illos fortiter amat"<sup>13</sup> contend that Seneca has deserted the camp of Stoicism for the Christian concept of God.

The solution, however, is not quite this simple. First of all, Seneca is not expounding or elaborating a Stoic "system" of philosophy. This would be impossible, for the Stoics really had no "system" of subjects or doctrines as we know them today. Systems were a subjective arrangement of later date. Zeno gave lectures and writings on a physical theory of the universe. His Greek followers, Cleanthes and Chrysippus, took various phases of these doctrines and elaborated them. Cleanthes took physics and Chrysippus, because of his many controversies,

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12 De Ben. 1.29.3

13 De Prov. 2.6

turned to the study of logic. Seneca, in turn, never proposed to classify or analyze the works of these men. His special forte was to be ethics. And, since ethics presupposes metaphysics, he also includes passing phases of this branch of philosophy in essays and letters. No Stoic, not even Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius at later dates, gave us complete expositions of a "system," but only lectures on general topics or jottings of random ideas. This lack of system is extremely unfortunate; still, says one man "as it was the aim of the Stoics to form men and not merely to train reasoners or to produce orators, that determined their mode of procedure."<sup>14</sup>

Another point that must be considered is Seneca's incoherency. George A. Simcox in his History of Latin Literature says: "He never succeeds in having a plan in any of his larger works; he is at the mercy of the association of ideas and of the way in which one topic suggests another."<sup>15</sup> This is evident in the De Beneficiis and the De Ira. After speaking of the ingratitude manifested by those who forget past benefits in the early part of Book Three of the De Beneficiis Seneca gets the thought that this is an odious vice and so perhaps should not go unpunished. This leads him to expatiate on various charges brought against cities and on the procedure of a law

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14 William L. Davidson, The Stoic Creed, Edinburgh, T. Clark, 1907, 32

15 George A. Simcox, A History of Latin Literature, New York, Harper and Bros., 1906, 2.2

court. At the outset of Book Two of the De Ira Seneca says that in this early section "quaerimus enim ira utrum iudicio an impetu incipiat,"<sup>16</sup> but in reality he tells how virtue considers anger reprehensible and how unworthy of the wise man it is to sink to this level. This same fault also makes for greater confusion in the present discussion, since Seneca nowhere in his writings takes time to explain in detail to what he has reference when, for instance, in the De Otio he asks "qui sit deus; deses opus suum spectet an tractet."<sup>17</sup> From this important idea, which he views quite contemptuously, as the context shows, Seneca then passes on without any further elaboration of what might have been a topic sentence.

A third difficulty has rendered it almost impossible for certain scholars to make any decision on such technical points as Seneca's concept of God. For, as Cruttwell puts it, like all the other thinkers of the time he cared nothing for consistency of opinion, everything for impressiveness of application. He was Stoic, Platonist, Epicurean, as often as it suited him to employ their principles to enforce a moral lesson.<sup>18</sup>

And, as another author remarks, "Seneca made a sort of amalgamation of the moralities of Zeno and Epicurus; it was true that one proceeded from idealism and the other from materialism, but what did it matter?"<sup>19</sup> A third states that he "contra-

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16 De Ira 2.1.1

17 De Otio 4.2

18 Charles T. Cruttwell, A History of Roman Literature, London, Chas. Griffin and Co., 1877, 387

19 Albert Grenier, The Roman Spirit, New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1926, 398

dicted himself within the range of the same treatise."<sup>20</sup>

Probably the most patent example of this fault is Seneca's vigorous attack against the Stoical doctrine that the wise man will take part in the government of the state. Seneca indicates that Zeno, to mention only one, remained a private teacher all his life. Therefore, if Zeno was consistent, he had intended his teaching of participation in civil life in some other sense, or attached some condition to it. But all this, of course, Seneca did not even mention until he himself, beginning to fear for his life, desired to withdraw from public life.

Therefore, the lack of system, incoherency, and inconsistency in Seneca should prevent one from falling into the mistake of certain investigators who believe the problem extremely simple or just non-existent. For them a certain set of quotable expressions sound exactly like St. Paul or, e contra, similar to the most complete Stoic. Thus, they are easily led to believe that this or that was Seneca's idea of God. The very same difficulties, however, have kept most men from giving any opinion on this subject at all. This is, at least, a safe procedure. One writer, Samuel Dill, as shall be seen in a later chapter, declares the god of Seneca possesses a spiritual nature in one place and a pantheistic existence on the very following page. But he is unique in that. Most men, in re-

ferring to the god of Seneca hardly go beyond expressing certain resemblances to Christian and to Stoic concepts. They have done much in carrying their investigations as far as they have and "the jungle of literature which has grown up around Seneca testifies to the manifold inquiries stimulated by his personality and works."<sup>21</sup> Still, even though "his influence makes him one of the most prominent figures in the history of letters"<sup>22</sup> we are yet seeking the clarification of many statements in his works. Seneca's idea of God is one of these problems.

The present study is an attempt to reach a satisfactory answer to the question, "What did Seneca mean by the many terms he used to signify a Supreme Being?" In other words, "What is God for Seneca?"

This question is one exceedingly worthy of research on various scores. Seneca has been termed a great teacher, philosopher, and writer. Because of his reputation and position it is good to see his beliefs on the basis of erudition alone. But an even more important reason was Seneca's influence during his own lifetime and his reputation throughout the centuries. Being a man who was intimately connected with the emperors and on the political scene for many years, he very naturally spread his ideas to a large number of the ruling class and through them to the private citizens. Just how much Seneca's teachings

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21 Duff, 196-7

22 Duff, 197

counteracted or assisted the rising Christianity is another question, but there can be no doubt that the two doctrines of Stoicism and Christianity met one another within the boundaries of Rome. St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans was sent in approximately 57 A.D. and this fact alone indicates that a goodly number of Christians were then abiding in the capital of the world.

Be that as it may, Seneca's position, personal contacts, and writings made him and his utterances of wide importance both in his day and ours. Tacitus, Dio Cassius, Juvenal, Martial all voice different reactions of the ancients while J. Wight Duff's comments on the wealth of Senecan commentaries<sup>23</sup> point out the impression Seneca has made upon medieval and modern scholars alike. It is obviously worthwhile then to consider and weigh the most important concept any man could have in the works of this most important man.

Was Seneca's concept of a Supreme Ruler of the universe the conventional pantheism or materialistic principle of the preceding Stoics? Or was it an idea that was altered by the influence of Christianity into a spiritual, personal, loving creator and guardian of men? Or did Seneca so interwine and mix his manner of speaking as to indicate that he himself had no clear concept of God?

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23 Duff, 197

It is clear from Seneca's many references to the Epicureans, Pythagoreans, Cynics, and Stoics that his life and learning had come under the influence of these various schools of philosophy. To assist in discovering Seneca's own concept of God it becomes necessary to consider the men from whom he imbibed his doctrine and even those whom he claims he rejects and anathematizes. It will be easier then to classify him with a certain group or to find in what he disagrees with them. Or we can see how he constructs an amalgam of various ideas to satisfy his purpose of the moment.

Secondly, it is important to find what deductions various selected classical scholars have arrived at after their reading of Seneca's own words. As has been expressed earlier, these investigations, in most cases, consist merely of a few words of explanation for a few select phrases from Seneca. But even this is of some worth since it shows very plainly either how little research has been done on this topic or how difficult men have found its solution to be. If little research has been done, there is no reason why that situation should continue. If the solution is difficult, it is useful to see why, and, if possible, to provide a suitable answer. In any case the work will be profitable, for it will clarify the extent of the studies already made and show the need of further evidence and examination before any conclusive statement can be issued.



Seneca's testimony itself, however, is the important element. His philosophical essays and letters give many references to god, Nature, Fate, and Fortune. In some instances these terms will signify the same thing. At other times not. Frequently the language of Seneca equals that of any Christian, as when he says: "plurima beneficia nos deus defert sine spe recipiendi, quoniam nec ille conlato eget nec nos ei quidquam conferre possumus."<sup>24</sup> But apparently he grovels just as low in materialism in his statement: "mundus hic, quo nihil neque majus neque ornatius rerum natura genuit."<sup>25</sup> How then to account for this and many other apparent contradictions? That question constitutes the heart of any study on the God of Seneca. Before any answer can be offered one must understand Seneca's references to god and Fate in their contextual background, and then as weighed against Seneca's general philosophical "system" and the influence exerted on him. All this must precede the final decision.

In each of the following chapters, then, we will determine:

- (1) What others have said about Seneca's idea of God;
- (2) What influences were exerted upon Seneca;
- (3) What Seneca himself had to say;
- (4) What we can conclude from the evidence presented.

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24 De Ben. 4.9.1

25 Ad Helv. 8.4

## CHAPTER II

### WHAT OTHERS SAY

In the actual study of Seneca much time and attention have been devoted to breaking through the mere shell of words into the heart and mind of the author himself. There are so many points which puzzle one who is reading Seneca for the first, or the hundredth, time that he is inclined to meditate on the actual meaning various passages held for their author. Then, after further investigation one must either confess that he has found no answer or he will endeavor to list what he believes is the true interpretation of Seneca's words. For, there are so many practical applications in Seneca that each one thinks himself privileged to give the true meaning concealed in his words.

It is no wonder, therefore, that classical scholars in each age find in Seneca something that demands their interest. For some it is Seneca's life itself in relation to the political movements of the times. Others wish to evaluate his morality according to the standards of his own doctrines. Many are attracted to the peculiarities of his literary style. And a host are halted by the more than passing similarity to the Christian principles of life. Whatever it is that draws men to

Seneca, he has become one of the more widely discussed and debated about authors of the Silver Age.

All types of analysts are to be found in Senecan literature. Numerous writers have been drawn to give their opinions of what Seneca's ideas on God really were. The conclusions they reached are many and varied, depending in large part on the extent of their study. To a lesser degree their answers must hinge on their own cultural, philosophical, and religious background, although an investigation of these will scarcely enter into the scope of the present topic. It is sufficient to note that various answers have been given and conflicting conclusions reached by many who have touched on Seneca's concept of the Supreme Being of the universe.

In studying the opinions offered by a dozen or more classicists one finds three answers given on the essence of the deity. The first position held is one of initial and final doubt; the second is the doctrine of Stoicism and materialism; the last is that of Christianity and spirituality.

In his book, The Stoic Creed, William Davidson treats the entire Stoic school from Zeno to Marcus Aurelius, with greater stress placed on Seneca, Epictetus, and Marcus Aurelius. First, he assumes that Seneca maintained all the Stoic doctrines, and, secondly, he fails to state which one or what group of the other writers held a certain opinion attributed to

the Stoics. Nevertheless, in two passages in which special reference is made to Seneca, Davidson admits he can come to no definite decision, for "whether the supreme providence is a living personal God, or merely an impersonal principle, the course of nature, or the universe itself, is very doubtful."<sup>1</sup> Further on, relying, no doubt, in part on Seneca's own admission that "nemo novit deum,"<sup>2</sup> he says:

Right well, for instance, does Seneca realize that it is not possible for us to comprehend fully the power that made all things, although we may discover him in part on every hand. On two points alone is he perfectly assured - namely, THAT THERE IS A GOD, AND THAT WE ARE TO ASCRIBE TO HIM ALL MAJESTY AND GOODNESS.<sup>3</sup>

Faced with the all too many inconsistencies that appear on the surface of Seneca's works, Davidson refuses to believe that Seneca himself knew the ultima essentia of God.

Just a step beyond the state of doubt registered by Davidson is the certainty of another scholar that one God does exist.

It is of interest to note that Seneca makes his contribution to the search for a satisfying monotheism; that he keeps alight the torch kindled by Panaetius and tended by Posidonius, Varro, and Cicero...Indeed, it may be said the most important advance in theory made by Roman Stoics is to be found in the gradual substitution of one god for the pantheistic materialism of Zeno and his earlier Greek followers.<sup>4</sup>

This man calls it an important advance to come to the con-

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1 Davidson, 214

2 Ep. Mor. 31.10

3 Davidson, 221

4 Hubert McNeill Poteat, "Some Reflections on Roman Philosophy," Classical Journal, 33.520

clusion that one God exists. His statement is true. However, the nature of this one God is forgotten. And, in reality, it seems difficult to see how one could arrive at the conclusion that there must be one God without understanding something more of his nature.

In his mention of Seneca the Greek scholar, Caird, concurs in the generalities already offered. His idea seems to be that Seneca did not attempt to reach any ultimate answer, but was satisfied to take for granted basic ethical principles and the ultimate nature of reality.

The crude theories of Epicurus and Zeno as to the criterion of truth, and as to the ultimate nature of reality, are in a distinctly lower key of speculation than the Platonic and Aristotelian metaphysic and dialectic. Still lower from a scientific, if not from a literary point of view, are the epigrammatic moralisings of Seneca, the aphoristic meditations of Marcus Aurelius, and practical sermons of Epictetus, in all of which the theoretic basis of ethics is rather presupposed than explained.<sup>5</sup>

Most authors, however, incline in varying degrees toward the opinion that Seneca was possessed of Stoical tendencies. Probably the weakest affirmation in that regard, although quite symptomatic, is one that says nothing of the deity in Seneca, but lists Seneca's dependence on the Stoic system.

Although Seneca feels very strongly that philosophy is to be practical, and not a mere compendium of abstract truths, he is always entangling himself in casuistry, for scruples grow up fast when people insist on suppressing the strongest of their natural impulses, and the artificial estimate of life on which

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5 Edward Caird, *The Evolution of Theology in the Greek Philosophers*, Glasgow, James MacLehese and Sons, 1904, 2.39-40

the Stoics laid so much stress as a guide to right conduct required to be guarded by an immense apparatus of distinctions. Seneca distrusts his own weakness too much to be independent; though he is always fretting at the bondage of system, he never emancipates his favorite conception of bona mens from the paradoxical trammels of Zeno and Chrysippus.<sup>6</sup>

This quotation also indicates the problem experienced by other students in determining any final judgment of Seneca's words when it mentions Seneca as "always entangling himself in casuistry."

How much Seneca leans upon Stoic arguments is better described by Ralph Stob. He comes to certain conclusions, which, though more revealing, are not very detailed. "The primary substance is the fiery Logos. This resides in God and man. The two are identical. Man is God, and God is man. Since the Stoic has only an immanent God, it naturally follows that God and man are one. The teaching runs all through the Stoic writings."<sup>7</sup> Just what the nature of God and then of the "fiery Logos" is is mentioned later on in the clause, "in view of the God-concept of Stoicism which presents God only as immanent and then, too, impersonal and material."<sup>8</sup> Seneca, therefore, is presumed to be a Stoic and to be following the general Stoic concept that God is immanent, impersonal, and material. Just what evidence there was in Seneca to lead Stob to this opinion is not revealed.

Another writer also takes for granted that Seneca is a

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6 Simcox, 2.15

7 Ralph Stob, "Stoicism and Christianity," Classical Journal, 30.219

8 Stob, 220

Stoic, though admitting he does have a different tone to his doctrines because he seems to imbibe something of the spirit of other schools of philosophy. "He (Seneca) was opposed to the doctrines of his school in no important point; nevertheless, his philosophy breathes a somewhat different spirit from that of the ancient Stoics. He made use of other authorities than the Stoics, especially the works of Epicurus."<sup>9</sup> Despite this note of eclecticism "without contradicting the Stoic materialism and pantheism he (Seneca) laid special emphasis on the ethical features of the Stoic idea of God on which the belief in providence was based."<sup>10</sup> Therefore, according to this author, Seneca concurred in the metaphysical concepts of the Stoics concerning God, but paid little heed to this field of philosophic exploration. His forte was ethics, hence his love for further elaborating the benevolent side of God's nature. Therefore, we find many references to such attributes as mercy, kindness, generosity, and providence, but few to the essence of the deity from whence they flow.

In a somewhat more elaborate treatment, Chief Ancient Philosophies, Stoicism, W.W. Capes seems to be straining to find some note of Christianity in what he claims to be the Stoical teachings of Seneca. Capes is not even too sure that Seneca is nothing more than an eclectic, for in a lengthy passage he

9 Eduard Zeller, Outlines of the History of Greek Philosophy, New York, Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1931, 267

10 Zeller, Outlines of the History of Greek Philosophy, 268

takes pains to show Seneca's tendency to borrow what pleased him from philosophers of any school whatsoever.

Some of the most striking parallels to our religious thought belong, not to Seneca himself or to the system of philosophy which he professed but to earlier schools and different thinkers from whom he freely borrowed. We have already called attention to this tendency, which was natural enough in that late age when rigid exclusiveness was out of date and eclecticism had become a ruling fashion. Thus the beautiful expressions to be found in him about our Heavenly Father, from whom come all good and perfect gifts, whom we should try to imitate, that we may be perfect like our Father...these and many others may be found in Plato centuries before they gained a place, but not always a harmonious setting, in the letters and dialogues of Seneca. In the school of Pythagoras, which he followed in his youth, he may have learnt to examine himself, as was his later practice, to listen to the voice of conscience, and to confess the wrong which he had done. From Epicurus, as we have seen, he borrowed much, and among other sentiments that one, "the consciousness of sin is the first step towards salvation," (Ep. Mor. 28) on which so much stress has been laid as an evidence of Scriptural doctrine.<sup>11</sup>

Still, for all his borrowing, Seneca was always a Stoic at heart, says Capes. "But there can be no doubt that Seneca adhered without hesitation to the Stoic creed, and his reserves and compromises belong more to his heart than to his head."<sup>12</sup> This statement is a trifle difficult to understand in view of a further admission. "We see, therefore, that in spite of all his borrowed phrases of the school, there is little in Seneca's own teaching of the hardness and coldness of the Stoical school."<sup>13</sup> If Capes by this passage means to infer that Seneca's teaching was not Stoical in essence as well as expression, then he apparently is not clear in his own mind as to what sys-

11 William W. Capes, Chief Ancient Philosophies, Stoicism, New York, Pett, Young and Co., 1880, 168-9

12 Capes, 150

13 Capes, 156



tem and doctrines Seneca was trying to follow. It is more likely, however, that Capes saw more in Seneca than his Christian manner of speaking, for he says: "Devotional language there may be, indeed, to express the fervour of emotion, kindled by the effort to pursue in thought the Absolute Being in all its endless changes through the immensities of time and space."<sup>14</sup> He wishes to stress the fact that an emotional element flowed through Seneca,

yet we must admit that resemblances of tone and style do not touch the essentials of the moral system, and fail to bridge over the gulf between the Stoic and the Christian system. The former was Pantheistic still; its God is diffused through all the stages of creation; its providence is an inexorable fate; its Holy Spirit ebbs and flows like tidal waves through all the multitudinous realms of Nature.<sup>15</sup>

He continues his discourse on Seneca's Stoicism by indicating that the deity is not the persona we might conclude he is from his attributes. "The Fatherhood of God is an unmeaning phrase in such a system. Instead of filial devotion to a personal will, we have submission to an absolute law."<sup>16</sup> In yet another place he says: "No personal Maker had brought man into being; there was no one to call him to account for his stewardship of powers entrusted to his keeping. Instead of, 'The Lord giveth, the Lord hath taken away'...we read in Seneca, 'Fortune has taken away my friend, but he was her gift.'"<sup>17</sup>

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14 Capes, 173

15 Capes, 172

16 Capes, 173

17 Capes, 175

In all this Capes treats Seneca's writings in general, as can be seen from the quotations offered, and briefly mentions some reflections of his own. Without explicitly listing passages in Seneca or giving a fair sampling of quotations, he favors the opinion that Seneca's deity followed the Stoic concept in all essentials, but that Seneca adopted a more devotional tone, such as Plato would employ, whenever his purpose demanded such a touch. Just what Capes considered the essentials of Stoicism we are unable to determine. He is more outspoken in deciding that the deity is not a personalized creator and benefactor, despite the allusions to charity, kindness, and benevolence, although he does stop short of telling us what God is, and how he reached this decision. Thus is proved again the difficulty of extracting any consistent views from Seneca. With reason, then, did Capes preface his remarks with the conviction that "it has been said with truth that, as an author, Seneca should be regarded rather as a spiritual director than as a systematic moralist."<sup>18</sup>

More willing than any of the previously mentioned critics to accept the Christian expression of Seneca as well as the possibility of a Christian meaning is the author, Frederic W. Farrar, in his Seekers After God. He will not accept an entirely Christian view of God because "his(Seneca's) eloquent

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<sup>18</sup> Capes, 143

utterances about God often degenerate into a vague Pantheism."<sup>19</sup> He does admit, on the other hand, that there is about as much to be said for one side as for another when he writes that the "divergencies of Seneca from the spirit of Christianity are at least as remarkable as the closest of his resemblances."<sup>20</sup>

To prove the resemblances to Christian principles Farrar spends much of one chapter (Ch. 15) giving passages in Seneca that are parallel to those of Scripture and pointing out that "he (Seneca) was no apathetic, self-contained, impassible Stoic, but a passionate, warm-hearted man."<sup>21</sup> We must wonder at Seneca's expression, if we follow Farrar, because he denies any intercourse between St. Paul and Seneca, and affirms, on the contrary, that Seneca, as well as Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius, ignored and despised all Christians. Whence, therefore, does Farrar derive the material to make the following remark? "God was their God as well as ours - their Creator, their preserver, who left not Himself without witness among them...And His spirit was with them, dwelling within them, though unseen and unknown, purifying and sanctifying the temple of their hearts."<sup>22</sup> This statement is true enough, but the connotation that these three Romans recognized and under-

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19 Frederic W. Farrar, Seekers After God, New York, A.L. Burt Co., n.d., 183

20 Farrar, 181

21 Farrar, 184

22 Farrar, 321

stood God in the same way as the Christians did is something without any proof whatsoever. Also, it seems less likely, by Farrar's own admission, when we read: "Though there may be a vague sense in which these (Seneca's) words may be admitted and explained by Christians, yet, in the mind of Seneca, they led to conclusions directly opposed to those of Christianity."<sup>23</sup>

Farrar approaches nearest to an examination of the deity on whom all his other discussions hinge in a short paragraph which leaves the question not entirely solved.

He (Seneca) diverges from Christianity in many of his modes of regarding life, and in many of his most important beliefs. What, for instance, is his main conception of the Deity? Seneca is generally a Pantheist. No doubt he speaks of God's love and goodness, but with him God is no personal living Father, but the soul of the universe - the fiery, primeval, eternal principle which transfuses an inert, and no less eternal, matter, and of which our souls are, as it were, but divine particles or passing sparks.<sup>24</sup>

We find that Seneca is only "generally a Pantheist." Does this mean that Farrar's next few lines on the deity are to be understood in this light or in their literal meaning? Supposing that God "is no personal living Father," we have a greater problem in determining what he is. True, he is the "soul of the universe," which, in turn, is a principle transfusing matter. When Farrar speaks of a "fiery" principle, is he to be taken to mean something material? And, because this principle "transfuses" matter must it also be comprised of things material?

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23 Farrar, 327

24 Farrar, 326

The question is left unanswered, though it can be more easily deduced that the deity was the fiery matter present in every existing thing. Yet, even if this deduction is allowed, it is weakened by the force of Farrar's concluding words on Seneca.

I cannot consent to leave him with the language of depreciation, and therefore here I will once more endorse what an anonymous writer has said of him: 'An unconscious Christianity covers all his sentiments. If the fair fame of the man is sullied, the aspiration to a higher life cannot be denied to the philosopher; if the tinkling cymbal of a stilted Stoicism sometimes sounds through the nobler music, it still leaves the truer melody vibrating on the ear.'<sup>25</sup>

Therefore, is the true theme coursing through Seneca a Christian view of God? For that question again no hint of an answer has been given and no answer can be legitimately assumed.

A very interesting study of the conflicting sentiments that Seneca causes to rise in his examiners is to be found in Samuel Dill's book, Roman Society From Nero to Marcus Aurelius. According to one man "it is not too much to say that this admirable work is the guide to the complex period with which it deals."<sup>26</sup> Dill's opinion, therefore, can be expected to be the result of detailed investigation.

Oddly enough, of all critics Dill takes the longest step towards Christianizing the words of Seneca. He begins

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25 Farrar, 331

26 Robert M. Wenley, Stoicism and Its Influence, New York, Longmans, Green and Co., 1927, 178, note 14

with the feeling that "the cold materialistic conception of God is irreconcilable with many passages in his (Seneca's) writings."<sup>27</sup> Still, Dill is forced to admit:

In his views of the nature of God and His relation to the external world and the human soul, Seneca often seems to follow the old Stoic tradition. There are other passages where he seems to waver between different conceptions of God, the Creator of the universe, the incorporeal Reason, the divine breath diffused through all things, great and small, Fate, or the immutable chain of interlinked causation.<sup>28</sup>

As if this chain of thought brought new conclusions, Dill continues:

He tends towards a more ethical conception of the Deity, as the Being, who loves and cares for men...Yet Seneca, in strict theory, PROBABLY never became a dissenter from the physical or ontological creed of his school. He adhered, in the last resort, to the Stoic Pantheism, which represented God and the universe, force and formless matter, as ultimately issuing from the one substratum of the ethereal fire of Heraclitus, and in the great cataclysm, returning again to their source.<sup>29</sup>

He concedes Seneca's "ethical conception of the Deity," but he has to allow also that Seneca "probably" remained Stoic, materialist, and Pantheist.

There is another vista opened, however, in Dill's rejoinder that Seneca "had absolutely broken with paganism."<sup>30</sup> Nor did he say this in a hesitating and doubtful manner. "Seneca is far more modern and advanced than even the greatest of the Neo-Platonic school, just because he saw that the old

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27 Dill, 389

28 Dill, 306

29 Dill, 306

30 Dill, 331

theology was hopelessly effete. He could never have joined in the last struggle of philosophic paganism with the Church."<sup>31</sup>

Carried on by the enthusiasm of this last remark, Dill goes even farther from his original Stoic interpretations.

He (Seneca) adheres formally to the lines of the old Stoic system in his moments of calm logical consistency. But when the enthusiasm of humanity, the passion to win souls to goodness and moral truth is upon him, all the old philosophical differences fade, the new wine bursts the old bottles; the Platonic dualism, the eternal conflict of flesh and spirit, the Platonic vision of God, nay, a higher vision of the Creator, the pitiful and loving Guardian, the Giver of all good, the Power which draws us to Himself, who receives us at death, and in whom is our eternal beatitude, these ideas, so alien to the older Stoicism, transfigure its hardness and its cold, repellent moral idealism becomes a religion.<sup>32</sup>

It is easy to detect in this passage Dill's attraction to the idealistic conception of God in Seneca. He thinks he sees Seneca adopt a dualistic philosophy and abandon the ancient materialistic monism of the Stoics. His eagerness to envision a spiritual explanation to Seneca's words is very evident in the preceding passage. He becomes even more definite after further consideration. "In Seneca he (God) develops into a moral and SPIRITUAL BEING, the source of all spiritual intuition and virtuous emotion, the secret power within us making for righteousness, as he is the secret force in all nature making for order."<sup>33</sup> Nor is this just one isolated sentence. While not entirely neglecting certain Stoic tendencies in

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31 Dill, 330

32 Dill, 304-5

33 Dill, 307

Seneca, Dill comes out directly to call God again a spiritual power, if not a person. "However loyal he may be in form to Stoic materialism, Seneca in the end regards God as no mere material force, however refined and etherealized, but a SPIRITUAL POWER: not perhaps limited by the bounds of personality, instinct with moral tendencies, nay, a moral impetus, which no mere physical force could ever develop."<sup>34</sup> Here Dill seems to recognize the peculiarity of his position, insofar as he asserts Seneca formally adheres to Stoicism, but actually believes in dualism and the spirituality of God's nature. However, he does not see his way clear to accept any other explanation. Besides, for him it is quite superficial to contrast materialist and idealist conceptions of God since he believes human thought and speech are incapable of escaping contradictions in any consideration of God. "What human conception of Him is free from similar contradictions? How can any conception of Him, expressed in human language, avoid them?"<sup>35</sup>

This is Dill's final answer. God is material force; He is spiritual power. He says that there is a contradiction in the way Seneca presents these aspects of God, but that it is impossible to speak of God without these contradictions. With this statement Dill thinks he exonerates both himself and

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34 Dill, 307

35 Dill, 307



Seneca from the charge of being incomprehensible, or, at the very least, indecisive.

It is quite remarkable to note how so many scholars have attempted to give their reactions to Seneca's words, and with a certain amount of consistency. Some, it is true, do not know what conclusions can be drawn from what they read, others do not believe Seneca had anything definite in mind, and still others thought he took these basic points for granted. There is a unity of belief amongst them, though, because a good selection of quotations prove that most hold to the general tone of Stoicism in Seneca's writings. The question seems to be how much Seneca depended on Stoicism when he spoke of God. On this point, as we have noted, divergent opinions arose. There are shades of variance ranging from pure materialism up the scale to almost pure spirituality. And no two critics give quite the same answer.

Because of the wide range of opinions exhibited on this point, and because, with all due respect to the men who have formulated these views, a complete analysis of this question has been sidetracked for less confusing issues, there is still room for yet another examination of Seneca's philosophical essays and letters. The following chapters will endeavor to arrive at some definitive answer to the question of the nature of Seneca's Supreme Being. This will be done by considering the various philosophical influences exercised on Seneca and

by studying the words of Seneca himself. Hence, by taking the latter in their literal meaning together with their relation to the former it will be possible to reach a solution for not the least of the problems to be found in Seneca's writings.

CHAPTER III  
INFLUENCES ON SENECA

Every great thinker, no matter how original his ideas, procedure, or conclusions, has in his lifetime been influenced by his teachers, readings, and associates. Some thought provoking sentence or word coming from Democritus caused Epicurus to pause and consider the value of his atomic theory of the universe. Heraclitus' fiery  $\pi\nu\epsilon\upsilon\mu\alpha$  assisted the Stoics in forming a stronger link between earth and heaven, between man and the ultimate principle of Being. Plato and Aristotle had their Socrates. As his predecessors Socrates possessed the Pythagoreans, Eleatics, and Milesians. In turn these men had in the preceding ages of history their wise men, their teachers, their exemplars.

Seneca was no exception to this rule. Rather, he goes far beyond its simple proof. He lived in an age that had sustained the weight of many divergent philosophies for centuries. For one as interested in philosophy as he, this meant contact not merely with Academic or Peripatetic teachings, but also with those other four current schools at Rome: the Sextii, Cynics, Epicureans, and Stoics. And it is from the latter group that Seneca especially received his early ideas and de-

veloped his philosophical doctrines.

Strangely enough, it is not to Plato and Aristotle that Seneca is indebted, but to what one man has termed the "lesser philosophies." However, this is quite understandable when we remember the character of the Roman people. For the Roman was a practical man above all else. The speculative abstractions in Plato's ideal world and the syllogistic exactness in Aristotle's metaphysical deductions either were too involved for him to bother about or made no sense after a cursory examination. It has been said, and rightly, that

it was consistent with the Roman spirit, however, to estimate the worth of philosophy, as of all other things, primarily according to the standard of utility; and, on the contrary to ascribe no importance to scientific opinions as such, when no great influence on human life was perceptible in them.<sup>1</sup>

Thus the Sextii, the Cynics, the Epicureans, and the Stoics could attract the Roman because they, just as he, were interested in conduct, in "an applied science of life, offering for troublesome enigmas a solution."<sup>2</sup> Henry D. Sedgwick sums this quite well when he says:

The Athenians demanded a metaphysical basis for their ethical creed, because by nature they took pleasure in abstract thought and academic disputations. The Romans, on the other hand, were a practical people, indifferent to metaphysics and science, but deeply interested in matters of conduct.<sup>3</sup>

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1 Eduard Zeller, A History of Eclecticism in Greek Philosophy, transl. by Sara F. Alleyne, London, Longmans Green and Co., 1883, 15

2 Duff, 13

3 Henry Dwight Sedgwick, Marcus Aurelius, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1922, 28

Seneca himself we will find was no exception to this rule when we study at close hand the nature of his writing and the content of his teachings. But more immediately we must see that each of these currently popular philosophies had come into contact with Seneca. This point requires little proof. In fact, it demands nothing more than a brief mention of a number of passages from Seneca's writings.

First of all Seneca tells of his admiration for Quintus Sextius, the founder of the school which took his name. Sextius had lived in the age of Augustus and had rejected a political career to give himself over completely to philosophy. One of his followers, Sotion of Alexandria, was an early professor of Seneca and it was because of him that Seneca came to express his esteem for Sextius himself. This Seneca did in no uncertain terms and on frequent occasions. Two of the most lavish encomia are spoken in his Epistulae Morales. He says: "Sextium ecce cum maxime lego, virum acrem, Graecis verbis, Romanis moribus philosophantem."<sup>4</sup> The expression "cum maxime lego" indicates the zeal and relish with which he went through this man's works. In another place Seneca fervently states:

lectus est deinde liber Quinti Sextii patris, magni, si quid mihi credis, viri...Quantus in illo, di boni, vigor est, quantum animi! Hoc non in omnibus philosophis invenies; quorundam scripta clarum habentium nomen exanguia sunt. Instituunt, disputant, cavillantur, non faciunt animum, quia non habent: cum legeris Sextium, dices: 'Vivit, viget, liber est, supra hominem

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4 Ep. Mor. 59.7

est, dimittit me plenum ingentis fiduciae.<sup>5</sup>

Besides these words of praise for Sextius, Seneca has incorporated many of his ideas, through his professor Sotion, into his own teaching. He approves of Sextius' abstinence,<sup>6</sup> of his advice concerning anger,<sup>7</sup> and of his examination of conscience.<sup>8</sup> Quite obviously Sextius and Sotion made a deep impression upon Seneca and must be reckoned as guiding his development.

Another early teacher of Seneca is mentioned often and with feeling in the letters to Lucilius. It is not often that a student tries to be the first to school and the last to depart. Still, that was the effect of Attalus on the young Seneca. He recalls this in rather effusive fashion. "Haec nobis praecipere Attalum memini, cum scholam ejus opsideremus et primi veniremus et novissimi exiremus, ambulantem quoque illum ad aliquas disputationes evocaremus, non tantum paratum discentibus, sed obvium."<sup>9</sup> Later he reminisces: "Attalum memini cum magna admiratione omnium haec dicere."<sup>10</sup> Undoubtedly it was through his efforts that Seneca became an eager admirer and panegyrist of Stoic principles. For Attalus was very definitely a Stoic and a forceful one at that. He spoke with such conviction of the value of poverty, for instance, that Seneca said

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5 Ep. Mor. 64.2-3

6 Ep. Mor. 108.17

7 De Ira 2.36.1

8 De Ira 3.36.1

9 Ep. Mor. 108.3

10 Ep. Mor. 110.14

he wished to leave the lecture room a poor man. "Saepe exire e schola pauperi libuit."<sup>11</sup> In a following letter<sup>12</sup> Seneca devotes great space to presenting Attalus' opinion of the worthlessness of riches. Seneca gives full-voiced approval to all that Attalus says when he remarks that by imitating Attalus' advice you will be striving for actual happiness and not for its mere appearance. "Haec nobis Attalus dixit: quae si voles frequenter cogitare, id ages, ut sis felix, non ut videaris, et ut tibi videaris, non aliis."<sup>13</sup> Thus do we find the Stoic element moving and forming to a certain degree the thoughts that were to flow from the pen of Seneca.

Epicureanism, likewise, receives frequent mention in Seneca's works, but nowhere as in his De Vita Beata does he praise its position quite so vigorously.

In ea quidem ipse sententia sum...sancta Epicurum et vita praecipere et, si propius arcesseris, tristitia; voluptas enim illa ad parvum et exile revocatur et quam nos virtuti legem dicimus, eam ille dicit voluptati: jubet illam parere naturae.<sup>14</sup>

Later he continues: "Itaque non dicam...sectam Epicuri flagitiorum magistram esse, sed illud dico: male audit, infamis est, et immerito."<sup>15</sup> But these selections are not all. In many of his early Epistulae Morales Seneca closes with a short saying of Epicurus by which he presses some practical point for Lu-

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- 11 Ep. Mor. 108.14  
 12 Ep. Mor. 110.14-20  
 13 Ep. Mor. 110.20  
 14 De V.B. 13.1  
 15 De V.B. 13.2

cilius to ponder and to carry into execution. "Honesta res est laeta paupertas" is the bit of advice with which he concludes Letter Two. "Magnae divitiae sunt lege naturae composita paupertas" ends Letter Four; and in Letter Eight Seneca has it that "philosophiae servias oportet ut tibi contingat vera libertas." Letters Twelve, Thirteen, Fourteen, Sixteen, Seventeen, Eighteen, and Twenty One, to consider just a few of the earlier letters, all quote with complete approbation some select bit of Epicurean advice. In this wise Seneca plainly shows a thorough knowledge of Epicurus and his agreement with at least certain Epicurean teachings. This means also that it was possible for Seneca to have chosen part of the Epicurean physics, metaphysics, and theology for himself.

The last group that played an important part in forming Seneca's philosophical doctrines were the Cynics. These men must be mentioned, however, not because of any special favor they received in Seneca's eyes, but rather because they constituted a negative norm of his beliefs. Seneca did not take issue with the character of every individual Cynic because, of Demetrius, he must admit "egregie enim hoc dicere Demetrius Cynicus, vir meo iudicio magnus, etiam si maximis comparetur;"<sup>16</sup> but of their doctrines and mode of life he apparently can find nothing worthy of approval. Speaking to a Cynic who asks for money after expressing a hatred of it, Seneca says: "Indixisti



pecuniae odium ; hoc professus es, hanc personam induisti: agenda est."<sup>17</sup> Then in the De Brevitate Vitae he states what seems to him a distinctive feature of various schools in the words: "Disputare cum Socrate licet, dubitare cum Carneade, cum Epicuro quiescere, hominis naturam cum Stoicis vincere, cum Cynicis excedere."<sup>18</sup> There is no odious attachment to any of these epithets except that applied to the Cynics. Discussion, doubt, peace, and virtue are all in accord with human nature. It is left to the Cynics alone "excedere hominis naturam." In looking at their concept of God, then, we must remember that Seneca stood in opposition to their manner of seeking happiness and for their explanation, or lack of explanation, of the ultimate principles of the universe. For "the Cynic is opposed to the whole world; he needs for virtue no scientific knowledge of the world and its laws; he regards nothing external to himself; he allows nothing to influence his conduct, and attaches value to nothing."<sup>19</sup>

These were the four groups, then, that played an important part in developing and advancing the theories and applications of morality that Seneca was to propound in his writings. All scholars agree that Seneca followed the Stoic school of thought in general outline. It would be practically impossible

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17 De Ben. 2.16.2

18 De Brev. V. 14.2

19 Eduard Zeller, Stoics, Epicureans, and Sceptics, transl. by Oswald J. Reichel, London, Longmans Green and Co., 1892, 389

to prove anything else when Seneca uses the words nos and nos-  
tros in speaking of the Stoics in many passages. Besides, the  
high praise which he renders to their teachers, propositions,  
and to their way of life all point to his approval of their po-  
sition. Still, it must be remembered that

in Seneca, the freer position in regard to the doctrine of his  
school which he claimed for himself, is shown in his views con-  
cerning the end and problem in philosophy. If in the original  
tendencies of Stoicism there already lay a preponderance of the  
practical interest over the theoretical, with Seneca this was  
so greatly increased that he regarded many things considered by  
the older teachers of the school to be essential constituents  
of philosophy as unnecessary and superfluous.<sup>20</sup>

Seneca also indicates his free use of other than Stoic ideas in  
admitting "quicquid bene dictum est ab ullo, meum est,"<sup>21</sup> and  
again in asking of Lucilius, "quid enim nocet alienis uti ex  
parte qua nostra sunt?"<sup>22</sup> And he proceeds in the first in-  
stance to quote Epicurus and in the second Plato.

Since Seneca has manifested a certain trend toward ec-  
lecticism in his doctrines, it makes the investigation of the  
schools influencing him all the more important. We will con-  
sider in succession the concept of God as proposed by the Cyn-  
ics, the Sextii, the Epicureans, and the Stoics before ad-  
vancing to the study of Seneca in his essays and letters. More-  
over, since the physics of the Stoics and Epicureans is in  
reality the basis of their explanation of God, it is also

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20 Zeller, Hist. of Eclect., 204-5

21 Ep. Mor. 16.7

22 De Ira 1.6.5

necessary to give a complete picture of their natural science. This procedure is not superfluous in the least. Instead, it contains in germinate the ultimate answer to the question of this thesis. For after studying Seneca's words, ideas, and modes of expression concerning the deity, it becomes necessary to find in what light these utterances are to be valued. What is Fate to signify? Or Fortune? Or Nature? What is the nature of the being that corresponds to this terminology? This can only be understood by considering Seneca's explanation of the universe. And his conclusions concerning the universe will be more easily interpreted when measured against the schools of thought that came to have such an important place in his education and in his writings. These were the Cynics, the Sextii, the Epicureans, and the Stoics.

## SECTION A

### THE CYNICS

Whether the followers of Antisthenes received the name "Cynics" from the gymnasium Cynosarges in which they held school or whether from the type of life they led, popular belief is more in favor of the second possibility.

Although Antisthenes had been a devoted disciple of Socrates, he lacked the broad view of the true philosopher. Or, perhaps, it was because he was such a devout believer in Socrates that his outlook on philosophy had become narrow. For what Antisthenes had most admired and imitated in Socrates was

his independence of character; on this account he attached no value to scientific investigation in so far as it had no direct bearing on active life."<sup>23</sup>

From that moment the die was cast. "Cynicism remained to the end a mode of life rather than a system of thought."<sup>24</sup> Art, learning, mathematics, science were all considered worthless. Only virtue was good and vice alone was evil.

Since the only good for man is what is appropriate (οἰκεῖον) to him and this is nothing more than his mental and spiritual possessions, everything else, fortune, honour, freedom, health, life itself, are in themselves not goods, nor are poverty, shame, slavery, illness and death in themselves evils; least of all should pleasure be regarded as a good and toil and labour as an evil; since the former, when it becomes a man's master, corrupts him, while the latter may teach him virtue.<sup>25</sup>

Thus the precepts of a practical morality constituted the whole of philosophy for the Cynics.

But even that is not worthy of condemnation. It was the manner in which they believed that virtue was to be acquired and the explanation of virtue that merited for them the title, "dog-like" philosophers.

As was said, Antisthenes admired the independence of Socrates. In his own philosophy then he wished "to isolate the individual and maintain his independence, his natural freedom

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23 Zeller, Outlines of the History of Greek Philosophy, 108-9

24 Paul E. More, Hellenistic Philosophies, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1923, 72

25 Zeller, Outlines of the History of Greek Philosophy, 109

and self-sufficiency. Indeed, to Antisthenes, the autonomy of the individual, his independence of everything but himself, seemed of itself to constitute that supreme good which Socrates had taught him to seek."<sup>26</sup> In other words, this is a negation of any bondage. Self is asserted against everything that belongs to the not-self; the individual demands to be his own law and end.

In this way the Cynics were occupied with the negative side of philosophy. Their "activity was taken up in the manifestation of hatred for institutions and principles of a society which seemed to hinder the expression of one's individuality."<sup>27</sup> Naturally they were revolutionists, ready to dissolve the family and society, just to bring men back to nature. The Cynics, however,

interpreted the precept 'Follow Nature' negatively and destructively by ridiculing the institutions of his country and the very idea of patriotism and by making a violent protest in his daily life and behaviour against the traditional code and the established order. This nature became almost another name for anarchism and unparalleled license was permitted to individual caprice.<sup>28</sup>

With this interpretation of life it was impossible for the Cynics to maintain any serious form of religion. For in arming man against man they also armed him against heaven. We would even suppose that the Cynic would neglect religion and

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26 Caird, 62

27 Caird, 72

28 Robert D. Hicks, Stoic and Epicurean, London, Longmans Green and Co., 1911, 10

God completely. William L. Davidson in The Stoic Creed offers a possible answer to this paradox.

When we remember his(Cynic's) acceptance of the primitive man as his model for life and conduct, we can readily see that he could not consistently have done it. For, to primitive men were due the gods and the accredited mythologies; and so these mythologies must somehow be accepted, if we are to return to a life conformable with nature. Obviously, however, they could not be accepted by philosophers in their bare literality, and so they must be allegorized.<sup>29</sup>

Were there actually any gods then? Zeller says the Cynics held that "only convention created the multitude of gods"<sup>30</sup> and that "they treated the religious beliefs and cults of their people in a spirit of enlightenment."<sup>31</sup> The Cynics, however, would not even give lip service to the accredited form of worship. And the reason stemmed from Antisthenes' denial of the spiritual side of Socratic teaching. Antisthenes was a materialist and accepted Nature as he saw it. "Antisthenes, apparently, was what Plato would call a semi-atheist: some kind of God he accepted as a power more or less identical with Nature; but it was a God remote from mankind, while the popular worship...was to the Cynic a matter of jest and contempt."<sup>32</sup>

Thus there was some sort of God for the Cynic, but the popular gods he termed allegorical. And the God he did admit was material and, perhaps, identified with Nature. As to the

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29 Davidson, 136

30 Zeller, Outlines of the History of Greek Philosophy, 110

31 Zeller, Outlines of the History of Greek Philosophy, 110

32 More, 66

actual essence of God, his attributes, his relations to men and the world the Cynic tells nothing. Man alone and his conduct are of interest to Antisthenes and the rest of his followers.

## SECTION B

### THE SEXTII

This little-known and short-lived school of philosophy played more than a passing part in Seneca's life. It had been founded by Quintus Sextius, a Roman, somewhere around 40 B.C. After his death its teachings were handed down first by his son and then by Sotion of Alexandria, Cornelius Celsus, Lucius Crassitius of Tarentum, and Fabianus Papirius. But the school was little-known and short-lived precisely because its mark was left only by the individual named.

Seneca, however, we have seen, in his early youth had been an admirer of this school and frequently praised its founder in his Epistles. The reason for this praise lies, no doubt, in his contact with above named Sotion of Alexandria. In one letter<sup>33</sup> Seneca says he was a puer and in another<sup>34</sup> he calls himself a juvenis at the time he eagerly listened to the words of Sotion.

But what influence might these men have had on Seneca's philosophy? "The writings of this school, too, have all been

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33 Ep. Mor. 49.2

34 Ep. Mor. 108.17

lost, with exception of some scattered utterances of the elder Sextius, of Sotion, and Fabianus."<sup>35</sup> The important thing to note is that in the writings that did remain there was nothing different from the teachings of Stoicism. True, the Sextii were more exclusively intent upon ethics than the Stoics, but in what they both treated their doctrines were the same. They, too, held that all syllogistic tricery is a waste of effort unless some moral principle is thereby to be inculcated. We must also always be in readiness to strike down that great enemy of man, folly.

The closest thing, however, to any mention of their view of God is reported to us by Seneca and that statement is in entire accord with the Stoic teaching. "Solebat Sextius dicere Jovem plus non posse quam bonum virum."<sup>36</sup> The Stoics say the same thing when they mention that "bonus tempore tantum a deo differt."<sup>37</sup> What the Stoic view of God was in its completeness will be seen later on; the opinions of the Sextii, for all practical purposes, may be declared the same.

Zeller sums up the work of the Sextii very well by stating that

we therefore find nothing in their school that is new and scientifically noticeable; it is a branch of Stoicism, which doubtless is indebted to the personality of its founder that it had

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35 Zeller, Hist. of Eclect., 182

36 Ep. Mor. 73.12

37 De Prov. 1.6



an independent existence for a time.<sup>38</sup>

If the Sextii did influence Seneca to any extent, they merely augmented and strengthened the Stoic ideas that he was already receiving in abundance from Attalus, another of his early teachers.

### SECTION C

#### THE EPICUREANS

Epicurus and his disciples were no different from the Cynics, Sextii, and Stoics in giving their attention predominantly to the study of ethics. Their position, however, is somewhat unique in that they tried to weave a physical pattern into the universe in order to justify the quest of pleasure, the object of their philosophy. And herein lies the extraordinary paradox of Epicurean logic. It "begins with regarding pleasure as the only positive good and ends by emptying pleasure of all positive content."<sup>39</sup> Epicurus admitted this visible world of bodies as the only reality, and believed that the only thing which has any certain value to man is his own immediate physical sensations. But, since it was harder to keep pain from the body at the very time of seeking pleasures, Epicurus was driven into a purely defensive attitude of life. While avowedly looking for positive pleasure he actually spent his time warding off the

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38 Zeller, Hist. of Eclect., 188

39 More, 20

more disagreeable elements of life. And one of the greatest of these was the so-called fear of the gods. This accounts for his explanation of the gods, as we shall soon see.

It must be said to Epicurus' praise that he was able to see "that you cannot have ethical doctrine without a basis of physical and metaphysical doctrine; you can have no rule of conduct without some view of the universe wherein the action is to take place."<sup>40</sup> Still, he looked at this principle from such an angle as to make it explain the preconceived notions he had formulated on pleasure and the greatest enemy of pleasure, the fear of the gods. Epicurus believed that any supernatural influence in the world deprived man of his peace of mind and kept him in constant fear. Hence he attempted to develop a system of physics and metaphysics to explain away any and all supernatural power the gods might exert over the destinies of men.

Since Epicurus was not interested in natural science for its own sake, he was content to offer merely a general explanation of the world. He wished to say only as much as necessary to remove the fear of the gods and to indicate that all natural phenomena can be explained by natural causes. And even in desiring to do this he was unwilling to, or incapable of, making new studies before presenting his own case. Therefore,

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40 Edwyn Bevan, Stoics and Sceptics, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1913, 31

confining his interest in nature, as Epicurus did, entirely to this general view of things, he was all the more inclined, in carrying it out into details, to rely upon some older system. No system, however, appeared to correspond better with his tone of mind than that of Democritus, which commended itself to him ...by referring everything to matter, and by its theory of atoms.<sup>41</sup>

Democritean atomism best suited Epicurus' "tone of mind" because for Epicurus the aim of philosophy was to promote human happiness with each individual being the ultimate end of all action, whereas with Democritus all that is real is individual atoms. For both, then, what is individual is the only reality. Hence, the natural science of Democritus seemed to present the best basis for the Epicurean ethics.

were the basic constituents of all things for Democritus. Therefore, they were the basic constituents for Epicurus.

But what did all this entail? It meant that the only reality is corporeal substance as divined in the ultimate atomic particles. These atoms also have always existed and will never cease to exist because they cannot be divided any further into nothingness and destroy the first precept of Democritean natural science, namely, that nothing can come from nothing and nothing can be resolved into nothing. Then to explain the origin of the world Democritus had stated that a large number of these atoms had gathered in this particular section of the τὸ Κενόν . At some later date plants, animals, and men apparently just happened to come into existence by some

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41 Zeller, Stoics, Epicureans, and Sceptics, 438

fortuitous association of atoms, for on this point Epicureanism is strangely silent.

However, did all this affect the popular belief in the gods? Epicurus was sure it did. With the atomic system as the ultimate cause of all things, we would think that Epicurus had abolished the gods completely and that he had lapsed into complete atheism.

But here, for one reason or another, he drew back. Though the thought of Providence was utterly repugnant to him, and though he swept away, with one grand gesture of disdain the whole fabric of signs and portents and prophecy, he still in a fashion clung to the existence of the gods.<sup>42</sup>

This is just another Epicurean paradox. Freedom from fear is the primary aim of his philosophy. And Epicurus associated religion and the gods with this fear. Nevertheless, he did not abolish the gods as his physics seemed to postulate. Why?

He did not, however, make any attack on belief in the gods, partly because the universality of this belief seemed to prove that it rested on real existence, and that the images from the appearance of which alone he can explain it arise at least partly from real things and are therefore perceptions and not merely imagined images; partly, because he himself felt the need of beholding his idea of happiness realized in the gods.<sup>43</sup>

Of these three reasons for retaining the gods the last opens the way to the Epicurean concept of the gods.

Since human beings alone appear in any concepts that arise in our waking mind and in any dreams to represent the

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42 More, 41-42

43 Zeller, Outlines of the History of Greek Philosophy, 237

gods, it stands to reason, so say the Epicureans, that the gods are human beings. Upon consideration we realize that the human form is the most beautiful and that man alone is endowed with the great faculty of the intellect. Cicero in his De Natura Deorum<sup>44</sup> even had Epicurus attribute the difference of sex to the gods.

The gods have two attributes that are very proper to their being, perfect happiness and immortality. However, the gods could not possess such qualities if the atoms comprising their bodies were as dense as those in human bodies. Thus, they have bodies that consist of atoms that are tenuis, perlucidi, and perflabiles. Because bodies of this sort would have difficulty in existing in a world such as ours Epicurus places the abode of the gods in a region between the worlds, the intermundia.

Living as these gods do apart from the world, they cannot be expected to be interested in the affairs of men. Moreover, how could they possibly enjoy complete happiness if they were burdened by the cares of the world? And in what did the happiness of the gods consist?

The gods were exempt from sleep, sleep being a partial death, and not needed by beings who live without any exertion...Were powers of speech to be refused them, they would be deprived of the highest means of enjoyment - the power of conversing with their equals.<sup>45</sup>

44 Henry Rackham, ed. and transl., De Natura Deorum, London, William Heinemann, n.d., 1.34.95

45 Zeller, Stoics, Epicureans, and Sceptics, 468

In brief, these gods possess everything they could possibly desire. Why should they be interested in, or angry at, the deeds of men?

As difficult to understand as it may seem, Epicurus built up an entire section of physics in his philosophy to disprove the popular beliefs in religion and the gods only to use this same system to explain another set of deities more in accord with the fundamental aim of his ethical doctrines. Logically he should have been an atheist, proposing as he did his materialistic and monistic casualism. But after all his scientific meanderings he finally allowed a vast system of carefree, blissful, and disinterested gods anyway.

#### SECTION D

#### THE STOICS

Like the Epicureans the Stoics gave an explanation of the physical universe as the basis of their concept of God. However, unlike the Epicureans they made an earnest effort to delve into the secrets of nature and God's being. The Epicureans, we recall, cared nothing for science. They used it only to give an apparent logic to their principles of pleasure and exclusion of any supernatural force on the lives of men.

Though the Stoics were interested primarily in ethics, since their philosophy was concerned with right action and virtue, they still saw that right action was rational action. And,

in turn, rational action is action that is in harmony with human nature and physical nature. Hence the Stoic principle vivere secundum naturam expressed a twofold purpose. Conduct and virtue flowed from the individual, but for such action to be good was impossible unless the individual was in harmony with the laws of the universe. In this way the Stoic physical philosophy received more attention than would have been otherwise devoted to it. Still, even in the physical examination of the universe their

physical philosophy came to be that which should rather be called metaphysica or theology, the part which has to do, not with the relations of physical phenomena to each other, but only with relations of the material universe to God.<sup>46</sup>

In searching through the physical world for the ultimate principle of Being, Zeno came to the conclusion that anything is real that can act or be acted upon, *τὸ ποιεῖν τι καὶ πάσχειν*. Following the guidance of his senses Zeno at once limited reality to corporeal or material objects. There were innumerable difficulties brought forward against this bold statement. For, how could virtue, passion, emotion, day, month fall under this definition? Were these bodies? The Stoic answered that the things commonly considered incorporeal were in actuality only material when you investigated them closely enough. "It must be remarked that the Stoics distinguish between a finer and a coarser material"<sup>47</sup> and that

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46 Caird, 93

47 William Turner, History of Philosophy, New York, Ginn and Co., 1929, 167

"the common distinction between corporeal and incorporeal is merely a distinction between coarser and finer matter."<sup>48</sup> Not much of an explanation to be sure, but they offered it anyway as being consistent with the principles that were originally postulated.

Once the Stoics committed themselves to this fundamental explanation of physical nature it was easy to foresee, at least in general, the course that their entire physics would follow. The whole world was either a vast materialistic machine or a powerful dynamic material force. God in either case for the Stoic was to be something material, whether it be gross matter or active force. The complete answer, however, lies much more beneath the surface.

Matter alone was the only reality for the Stoics, but this they interpreted differently than the Epicureans. The latter also believed in materialism, but they maintained the universe was a machine made up of fine atoms. Thus the Epicureans placed the idea of matter as foremost in their explanation. The Stoics, however, placed force above matter. Matter was still the basis of all things, but it was matter in action. There really was only one element in nature, but it was viewed under two aspects. The first was ἕλη πρώτη, primordial matter; the passive element from which all things were formed.

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48 Turner, 168



The second was the active element, which forms things out of matter. This active element they further called the efficient cause of all things. And, as there is just one matter, there can be but one cause, since matter and force, or cause, are identical. It follows, then, that everything that exists or happens is due to this one efficient cause.

Reverting to a fundamental principle of Stoic physics that everything that acts is material, they said that the efficient cause was likewise material. But what was the nature of this efficient cause?

Falling back upon the ancient hylozoistic philosophy which found the source of nature in some one primordial stuff possessing the characteristics of life, and more particularly upon Heraclitus, he (Zeno) declared that the universal substratum of things was fire, or an element like fire in its fineness and fluidity.<sup>49</sup>

Everywhere heat is seen as the germinative power of life and growth. All things, also, have their own heat, and are preserved in life by the heat of the sun. Naturally, they said, what applies to parts of the world must be applied to the whole. Since heat or fire has this actuating and preserving force, this "is the power to which the life and existence of the world must be referred."<sup>50</sup> Or, as Cicero quotes the Stoics in his De Natura Deorum, "Ex quo concluditur, cum omnes mundi partes sustineantur calore, mundum etiam ipsum simili

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49 More, 78

50 Zeller, Stoics, Epicureans, and Sceptics, 144

parique natura in tanta diuturnitate servari: eoque magis quod intelligi debet, calidum illum atque igneum ita in omni fustum esse natura, ut in eo insit procreandi vis."<sup>51</sup>

From this point the Stoic conclusions are drawn without hesitation. This same world, which is the offspring of the one fiery element, manifests such great beauty, completeness, and order that there must be design or a plan behind it. Then, too, man possesses reason. How could he, a part of the world, have this power, unless the whole world held it first of all? Cicero adds another reason taken from Zeno as he remarks: "Zeno enim ita concludit: quod ratione utitur, melius est, quam id, quod ratione non utitur. Nihil autem mundo melius. Ratione igitur mundus utitur."<sup>52</sup> Moreover, there are creatures on the earth endowed with consciousness and a soul. Therefore, the world itself is conscious, has a soul. In brief, then, the universe is basically a material force which consists of the πνεῦμα or artificial fire, possessing consciousness, a soul, and even reason. This πνεῦμα with its qualities animates all things and contains the σπέρματα, or seeds, of all forms of being within itself.

One could question further into the nature of the Soul of the universe and the meaning of Reason, since this termin-

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51 De Nat. D. 2.9.23

52 De Nat. D. 3.9.22

ology inserts an element of spirituality into the materialism already proposed. These names also lead us to the very threshold of the Stoic deity. However, such an investigation would not render much satisfaction, for the same question has been in the mind of many scholars for years. One gives up in disgust, bemoaning the Stoic vagueness and lack of analysis. "Reason? Yes, but what did this mean? This surely is just one of the points where Stoicism, in its haste to construct a dogmatic system for popular use, stops short with a vague and unanalysed concept."<sup>53</sup> Let us not be thwarted, however, by failing to understand this one term. Zeno postulated complete dynamistic materialism. That we know for certain. The difficulty arises when Zeno, or Cleanthes, or Cicero uses terminology which, according to present interpretation, has a spiritual meaning. Following this lead, we think the ancient Stoics contradict themselves at every step when in one instance Fire is the basis of all things, and in another Reason seems to be ruling the universe. We are incapable of juxtaposing or equating Fire and Reason. That leads Caird to conclude that "Stoicism seems very confusing because in the exposition of unity it passes abruptly from materialism to spiritualism, from individualism to pantheism."<sup>54</sup> And Bevan states that

on the material side the doctrine conveys an apprehensible meaning; we can picture more or less a huge fiery sphere in empty space. On its spiritual side, it is harder to make sense of. For, to begin with, we can do little with a conception

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53 Bevan, 47

54 Caird, 82

which identifies Reason with a material substance.<sup>55</sup>

Very probably the Stoics did not intend any spiritual interpretation to be attached to Soul, Reason, or Providence. Sedgwick in a remarkable analysis explains everything according to the materialistic principles postulated by the ancient Stoics.

If we fix our attention on the orderly course of nature, on the steady sequence of phenomena, and especially upon the inexorable constraint in the lives of men, this cosmic energy assumes the aspect that we call FATE. But if we shift our attention to the relation of cause and effect, and ponder upon the cause of causes, the power becomes *αἰτία*, which corresponds after a fashion to the modern term FIRST CAUSE. Or, again, if we look at the universe from a biological point of view and concern ourselves mainly with the processes of life in animate creation, then, under that aspect, this power finds a more appropriate name as NATURE, the principle of growth and organic changes, for which the Greek word is *φύσις*. And, finally, if we reflect on the marvellous adaptation of part to part, how all things subserve other interests, how plan and purpose seem to run through the whole system, more especially if we feel gratitude and are able to pronounce the universe good, in that case the power assumes a sort of personality and becomes *πρόνοια*, PROVIDENCE.<sup>56</sup>

But what of Reason? It also fits into the same plan. When this primary material element works according to set laws, then it is called Reason. Thus, Reason, in reality, is not the spiritual or intellectual faculty that we know. It is merely the basic Fire of the world considered as universal Law, as the systematic course of the world's movements and changes.<sup>57</sup>

As confusing and contradictory as the language of the Stoics is at first glance it all becomes clear when we follow

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55 Bevan, 51

56 Sedgwick, 264

57 Zeller, Outlines of the History of Greek Philosophy, 216

logically from the first principles of their physics. Those principles are purely materialistic and with no admixture of spirituality. The Stoic conception of the deity, likewise, is understandable enough when examined in the same logical manner.

The foregoing investigation into the physical makeup of the universe has really presented the nature of the Stoic divinity. For, when the Stoics speak of God as Fire, Ether, *Voûς*, *πνεῦμα*, *Πρόνοια*, Universal Law, Nature, Fate, or Providence, they mean one, and only one, thing. The terms simply signify various aspects of the one primary force-laden matter penetrating the universe. It is unimportant whether the original element is called Heat, Air-Current, Fire, or Ether, for all are likewise of a material essence.

Somewhat confused by the widely variant phraseology of the Stoics certain philosophers think that "Stoic theology is an attempt to compromise between theism and pantheism."<sup>58</sup> They obviously find themselves, without realizing it, considering certain Christian aspects of such terms as Reason and Soul. But, neither, on the one hand, can they they avoid the very material significance of Efficient Cause, Nature, Fire, and Matter. In a word, they are confronted with the same difficulty that was presented in the Stoic system of physics. Since the ultimate

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<sup>58</sup> Alfred Weber, History of Philosophy, transl. by Frank Thilly, New York, Chas. Scribner's Sons, 1903, 143; also Turner, 168

principle of Being is the same in each case, there can only be one conclusion. If the First Cause and primary source of things is material Fire for the Stoic physicist, it must be for the Stoic theologian as well, unless, of course, there is objective evidence to the contrary. And there is none.

The consistent view has been crystallized by Ralph Stob in his article, "Stoicism and Christianity," for the Classical Journal. He says: "Stoicism has neither an ultimate spirit, nor an ultimate personality. For this same fiery substance is everywhere, in man, the material universe, the heavenly bodies. This is the all pervading divinity."<sup>59</sup> Thus, God is not a spirit, and he is not a person. Is God any kind of being distinct from the universe? No. The universe and God are the same reality. The varied terminology expresses only different manifestations of the same being. Sedgwick's application and interpretation of Fate, Nature, Providence, and First Cause in the Stoic physics holds true here also because the ens independens must be the same no matter what science we are considering.

If we call to mind once more the original premise of the Stoics that that alone is real which has a material form and is of a material nature, the problem of uniting the material and the spiritual in God disappears, just as it did in the

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59 Stob, Classical Journal, 30.219

analysis of the Stoic ultimate principle in physics. Although God is called the Soul,  $\nu\omicron\tilde{\nu}\varsigma$ , or Reason, the words mean nothing spiritual, but presuppose that these conceptions have bodies, just as anything else that is real. Hence, we must agree with Zeller that

those who charge the Stoics with inconsistency for calling God at one time Reason, at another Soul of the Universe, at another Destiny, at another Fire, Ether, or even the Universe, forget that they are attaching to these terms a meaning entirely different from that in which they were used.<sup>60</sup>

And how were they used? To signify various aspects of the one fiery substance intermingling with and penetrating all things. God, then, is the ultimate and basic matter of the universe constantly expressing itself in various forms. In other words, God is prime matter in action. However, this prime matter is not the same uninformed ens quo of Aristotle, but it is matter, an ens quod, as being replete with force and complete in itself.

From this Stoic logic it must follow that the system was completely pantheistic. The only reality was contained in matter and the productive power which formed the matter into the individual objects. But this reality was called the deity. God, therefore, was the world, and the world was God. Or, as Cicero says: "hunc mundum...animantem esse et Deum."<sup>61</sup>

Everything that exists, therefore, is part of the deity. Even in speaking of "gods" the Stoics do not contradict their basic explanation of deity. The term "gods" merely indicates

<sup>60</sup> Zeller, Stoics, Epicureans, and Sceptics, 155

<sup>61</sup> De Nat. D. 2.17.45

special phases or manifestations of the monistic material principle of Being which is "revealed either in the stars or in the forces of nature."<sup>62</sup>

In conclusion, the Stoic physics was monistic, materialistic, and pantheistic. God for the Stoics was the basic material element, Fire, changing itself into the various forms of material substances that exist in the world about us, although he is never distinct or separate from these substances.

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The foregoing presentation has given the basic concepts held by various schools of thought concerning the nature of the deity. It has studied, also, the sources of these concepts in the science of physics. It was these same schools that exercised their power over Seneca, and, it is to be supposed, molded his ideas of philosophy. An investigation of Seneca's own philosophical essays and letters will now prove whether his concept of the deity was patterned after any of the systems already explained, or whether he chose select bits of each system to assist him in expounding whatever ethical point he was discussing at the moment.

Further, these ideas will be weighed against Seneca's thoughts on the basic organization of the universe. Both of

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62 Weber, 143



these, in turn, will be measured against the philosophies explained in this chapter. By comparing the relation of Seneca's theology and physics with one another, and, then, with the ideas compiled in this chapter, we should be able to decide the nature of the Senecan Supreme Being without fear of contradiction.

CHAPTER IV  
SENECA SPEAKS

In Seneca's many essays and letters there are certain points that are immediately clear, but a good number are almost impossible to catalogue even after many readings. Seneca was definitely a Roman philosopher. As "Roman" stood for practicality and "Roman philosopher" for ethician or moralist, we know what broad pattern Seneca is to follow in his works. He treats of Physics, it is true, but he cares little for that subject in itself. And in Logic he has no interest whatsoever. Per se he is interested only in happiness and how man can best achieve it.

Any study of Seneca that lies beyond this focal point meets with immediate difficulties. As was mentioned earlier, problems arise because of Seneca's lack of system, incoherency, and inconsistency. We need only recall that these three are not insurmountable barriers. The first and the second can be eliminated by exhaustive research and by compilation of the matter pertaining to the thesis topic; the third is overcome by analysis. This present chapter is concerned primarily with this third problem. The complete list of passages found helpful in arriving at the solution of the problem can be found in

the appendix of this thesis. Here we will analyze the terminology that gives rise to Seneca's inconsistency and resolve the obscurity by certain deductions.

The beginning of all confusion occurs when Seneca seems to postulate four great powers in the world: Fate, Nature, Fortune, and God. In no one place does he pause to tell us in what or of what the essence of these "beings" consists. For Seneca always addressed his essays to a particular individual who, we presume, knew what Seneca implied in each instance. With us, however, it is different. When Seneca speaks of Fortune as a force against which there is no defence, "Nullus autem contra fortunam inexpugnabilis murus est;"<sup>1</sup> of Nature as the power that gives us our life, "Non tam benignum ac liberale tempus natura nobis dedit, ut aliquid ex illo vacet perdere;"<sup>2</sup> of Fate as the ruler of life's span, "Alium alio tempore fata comprehendunt, neminem praeteribunt;"<sup>3</sup> of God as the most powerful of beings, "deus ille maximus potentissimusque ipse vehit omnia,"<sup>4</sup> we have apparently four distinct supreme forces in the universe. By merely following the individual usage of the sixty to one hundred references to these terms in Seneca's works we could possibly draw that conclusion. However, in the Fourth Book of the De Beneficiis Seneca indicates the identity

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- 1 Ep. Mor. 74.19
  - 2 Ep. Mor. 117.32
  - 3 Ad Polyb. 11.4
  - 4 Ep. Mor. 31.10

of all these terms. We are amazed to discover that these are not four powers at all, but only one.

When Seneca says that God really implants in us our talents ("magisterque ex occulto deus producit ingenia"<sup>5</sup>), someone offers the objection that nature bestows these on him.<sup>6</sup> To this Seneca replies: "Non intellegis te, cum hoc dicis, mutare nomen deo? Quid enim aliud est natura quam deus et divina ratio toti mundo partibusque ejus inserta?"<sup>7</sup> He adds that "nec natura sine deo est nec deus sine natura, sed idem est utrumque, distat officio."<sup>8</sup> Later God is called Fate when Seneca says: "Hunc eundem et Fatum si dixeris, non mentieris; nam cum fatum nihil aliud sit quam series implexa causarum, ille est prima omnium causa, ex qua ceterae pendent."<sup>9</sup> The most important statement, however, comes as a summary of the preceding quotations. "Sic nunc naturam voca, fatum, fortunam; omnia ejusdem dei nomina sunt varie utentis sua potestate."<sup>10</sup> Fate, Fortune, and Nature all stand for the same God. The difference in name does not mean a multiplication of beings. Seneca makes this clear by using his own name as an example. "Si quod a Seneca accepisses, Annaeo te debere diceres vel Lucio, non creditorem mutares, sed nomen, quoniam, sive prae-

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5 De Ben. 4.6.6

6 De Ben. 4.7.1

7 De Ben. 4.7.1

8 De Ben. 4.8.3

9 De Ben. 4.7.2

10 De Ben. 4.8.3

nomen ejus sive nomen dixisses sive cognomen idem tamen ille est."<sup>11</sup> As Seneca is just one and the same person whether you call him Lucius, Annaeus, or Seneca, so God is the same whether you call him Fate, Fortune, Nature, or God.

Before we can understand the full meaning of God for Seneca, therefore, we must consider the many individual references to Fate, Nature, and Fortune, as well as to God, in his letters and essays. This plan is necessitated by the fact that Seneca nowhere gives a direct definition for any of these important words. From their various applications we must attempt to deduce the one basic meaning attached to these words. This idea will either give or lead to the nature or essence of God, the "maximus potentissimusque" Being of the universe. In the following sections of this chapter the terms Fate, Nature, Fortune, and God will be examined in an effort to capture the one significant note attached to each by their author.

## SECTION A

### FATE

Seneca gives fewer references to Fate in his writings than to the other terms to be studied, but he comes closer to giving an exact definition for this word than he does for the others. There are three notes that seem to be the outstanding characteristics of Fate. It springs from a central cause, is

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<sup>11</sup> De Ben. 4.8.3

inexorable, and deals with man's span of life. Fate more fundamentally is interpreted as an inexorable course of events in a human being's life; these events flow from a central cause and terminate only with death.

In the Quaestiones Naturales Seneca says that one is not wrong in calling God by the name of Fate. "Vis illum fatum vocare, non errabis." He then continues: "Hic est, ex quosuspensa sunt omnia, causa causarum."<sup>12</sup> Here obviously God viewed as Fate is looked upon as woven from the succession of causes flowing from this first cause. "Dicimus seriem esse causarum ex quibus nectitur fatum."<sup>13</sup> Then, once the course of events is set into motion there is no drawing back.

Cursum inrevocabilem ingressa ex destinato fluunt. Quemadmodum rapidorum aqua torrentium in se non recurrit nec moratur quidem quia priorem superveniens praecipitat; sic ordinem fati rerum aeterna series rotat, cujus haec prima lex est; stare decreto.<sup>14</sup>

As if this description would not satisfy his reader, Seneca repeats the question and the answer. "Quid enim intelligis fatum? Existimo necessitatem rerum omnium actionumque, quam nulla vis rumpat."<sup>15</sup> But Seneca reserves his strongest language to impress Polybius with the immutability of Fate. "Diutius

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12 Fredericus Haase, ed., Annaei Senecae Opera, Leipzig, B.G. Teubner, 1887, Quaest. Nat. 2.45.2

13 Ep. Mor. 19.6

14 Quaest. Nat. 2.35

15 Quaest. Nat. 2.36

accusare fata possumus, mutare non possumus. Stant dura et inexorabilia; nemo illa convicio, nemo fletu, nemo causa movet; nihil umquam ulli parcunt nec remittunt."<sup>16</sup>

In all these quotations Seneca has indicated that Fate signifies the original cause, as well as the succession of causes, of a series of unchangeable events. These notions, however, are incomplete until we understand over what events Fate exercises its power. Does Seneca believe that everything, including man's will, has been determined ad unum ever since the succession of causes was set in motion? Definitely not. In very striking fashion practically all Seneca's remaining references to Fate deal with the inevitability of death. This is our fate. This is the inexorable end to every man's existence. A succession of causes leads us to the completion of life's span whether we wish to die or not. "Alium alio tempore fata comprehendunt, neminem praeteribunt."<sup>17</sup>

Nothing can be added to life's span or subtracted from it. "Eunt via sua fata nec adiciunt quicquam nec ex promisso semel demunt."<sup>18</sup> Thus, it makes no difference who the person might happen to be. Seneca was surprised when Annaeus Serenus, a young friend, died. He muses that "hoc unum mihi occurrebat, minorem esse et multo minorem, tamquam ordinem fata servarent."<sup>19</sup>

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16 Ad Polyb. 4.1  
 17 Ad Polyb. 11.3  
 18 Ad Marc. 21.6  
 19 Ep. Mor. 63.14

In like manner old men think that they are younger than they really are, and believe that death is thus staved off, but Seneca says: "Mendacio sibi blandiuntur et tam libenter se fallunt quam si una fata decipiant."<sup>20</sup> Thus young and old alike are taken from this world when their fixed and unchangeable date of death arrives. We might as well be reconciled to this "fate" because "stat quidem terminus nobis, ubi illum inexorabilis fatorum necessitas fixit."<sup>21</sup>

Fate and God, therefore, are the same being, but Fate is, in this instance, merely one phase or manifestation of God's essence. This manifestation centers itself on the necessity of death for every human being. This idea is expressed in various ways and in different relations to God, but the meaning never changes. Our life springs from God, the first cause. Then through a succession of causes we lead our life and are finally brought to a death that is called "remorseless" or "inexorable" because no one can avoid it. Fate merely expresses the inevitability of death that flows from the very essence of human nature. Fate, therefore, is not something distinct from God, and does not have any separate existence. It is first of all used by Seneca to describe the definite limitation placed upon a creature's existence by reason of his human essence or nature. Then, when considered

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20 De Brev. V. 11.1

21 Ep. Mor. 101.8



in itself, it signifies the first cause of all men and events of life. And these events lead inescapably to man's departure from life.

## SECTION B

### NATURE

Nature is a term found in Seneca's writings more than sixty times with a variety of possible interpretations. Seneca says that we would commit no fault in calling God by this name. "Vis illum naturam vocare; non peccabis."<sup>22</sup> The reason immediately follows. "Hic est ex quo nata sunt omnia, cujus spiritu vivimus."<sup>23</sup> Nature, therefore, is God considered as the source of life and the principle of its continuation. This seems a simple concept until one analyzes the many functions and characteristics of Nature. It is then that all ideas of a personal creator and divine providence are replaced by the vagueness and confusion of a materialistic world. It is then that one begins to foresee what the Supreme Being will ultimately be discovered to be.

Nature is the life-giving principle in the world. "Natura subolem novam gignit"<sup>24</sup> and took thought of us before bringing us into existence.<sup>25</sup> Each one when brought into the

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22 Quaest. Nat. 2.45.2

23 Quaest. Nat. 2.45.2

24 De Ben. 1.11.1

25 De Ben. 6.23.6

world receives his own special character which it is hard to change, as "naturam quidem mutare difficile est, nec licet semel mixta nascentium elementa convertere."<sup>26</sup> No one can blame Nature for his condition, however, because man is not a hasty or purposeless creation,<sup>27</sup> but is such a marvelous creature that among the greatest of her works Nature has none of which she can more boast.<sup>28</sup> The main reason for this is man's intellect. Having this he surpasses all beings and needs nothing more.<sup>29</sup> Still, Nature was lavish in bestowing many other faculties on man since we have received our feet and eyes from her as well.<sup>30</sup> Together with these faculties Nature produced men in health and freedom.<sup>31</sup> And all this came to man from Nature so that he needs little else for happiness.<sup>32</sup> As for happiness, that is achieved by a man "qui natura magistra utitur"<sup>33</sup> and has as his definite aim "secundum naturam suam vivere."<sup>34</sup> However, if one works against Nature, his life is no different from that of one who struggles against the very order of things.<sup>35</sup>

If into a man's life material adversities should come,

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- 26 De Ira 2.20.2  
 27 De Ben. 6.23.6  
 28 De Ben. 6.23.7  
 29 De Ira 1.17.2  
 30 Ep. Mor. 55.1  
 31 Ep. Mor. 94.56  
 32 Ad Helv. 5.1  
 33 Ep. Mor. 45.9  
 34 Ep; Mor. 41.9  
 35 Ep. Mor. 122.19

however, he will merely say: "Non vides qualem nobis vitam rerum natura promiserit, quae primum nascentium hominum fletum esse voluit?"<sup>36</sup> After all, when death or captivity or disaster comes, none of them is unexpected, for we always knew in what disorderly company Nature had confined us.<sup>37</sup> A man naturally expects some difficulties and he recognizes that every hardship that time brings comes by a law of Nature.<sup>38</sup>

Misfortune, moreover, strikes harder at some men than at others. When that happens, people should understand that those who are treated most kindly by Nature are those whom she removes early to a place of safety.<sup>39</sup> It might be best that such a man die at once, but Nature did give us the means to cope with whatever problem besets us. "Ad quaecumque nos coge-  
bat instruxit."<sup>40</sup> And not the least of our equipment is fortitude of spirit.<sup>41</sup>

Life, besides, will not last forever. Nor does Nature testify that she exempts any man from this law of death, for "natura nulli se necessitatis suae gratiam facturam esse testata est."<sup>42</sup> For the man who has been crushed by material losses Nature has given a great blessing in her law of death.

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36 Ad Polyb. 4.3  
 37 De Tranq. An. 11.6  
 38 De V. B. 15.5  
 39 Ad Marc. 22.3  
 40 Ep. Mor. 90.16  
 41 Ep. Mor. 104.23  
 42 Ad Polyb. 11.1

He should rejoice in this discovery of Nature and look forward to the day of his release from his sorrows. "O ignaros malorum suorum quibus non mors ut optimum inventum naturae laudatur expectaturque."<sup>43</sup> If one believes death's release is still too far distant, he may use any portion of Nature to provide himself with a means of early departure from life.

Nemo te tenet; evade quo visum est. Elige quamlibet rerum naturae partem, quam tibi praebere exitum jubeas. Haec nempe sunt elementa, quibus hic mundus administratur, aqua, terra, spiritus. Omnia ista tam causae vivendi sunt quam viae mortis.<sup>44</sup>

One very obvious fact stands out in all the foregoing examples. Nature, indeed, as was first stated, is the source of life and the principle of its continuation, but this power is not distinct from God. Moreover, we have seen that, over and above this, Nature is not distinct from man. It is his own physical, human makeup. Nature only means man as viewed from the standpoint of a creature possessing all the processes of organic life and the principle of growth and change. Also, by reason of this type of life man's existence must terminate within a short span of years. Thus, when Seneca says that Nature forms man, or gives him certain traits, or health, or sickness, or death, he just means that man is born, lives, and dies according to the laws of his physical being.

That, however, is just half the picture. Man is only part of the universe. Birth, growth, change, and death all

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43 Ad Marc. 20.1

44 Ep. Mor. 117.23

play their part in the rest of the world as well. We receive a clue as to Seneca's meaning of Nature in reference to the wide universe when he says that we should use any part of Nature we wish, as earth, water, or air, to put an end to our unpleasant existence (Ep. Mor. 117.23). Nature in this sense signifies the physical and mechanical operation and essence of the world at large.

In two rather lengthy descriptions of the workings of the universe Seneca indicates that Nature is merely this same universe following her own set laws and acting according to her own principle of being. Nature, he says, orders the heavens, changes the seasons, and brings to an end all things that have ever existed, while she herself exists forever. "Scimus a quibus principiis natura se adtollat; quemadmodum ordinet mundum, per quas annum vices revocet, quemadmodum omnia quae usque erant cluserit et se ipsam finem sui fecerit."<sup>45</sup> To change the seasons and moderate the weather is another of Nature's functions.<sup>46</sup> The planets also are regulated and ordered in their movements according to laws of Nature.<sup>47</sup> In this way the earth, the heavens, the seasons are seen to act according to an ordered arrangement and motion until the time comes for all things to be resolved into their original primal fire. Until that time Nature deals with matter as she pleases because she is

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45 Ep. Mor. 93.9

46 Ep. Mor. 107.8

47 Ad Helv. 6.7-8

matter. "Utatur ut vult suis natura corporibus."<sup>48</sup> We should recall also that when Nature is about to return to fire("recessura in ignem") nothing of ours is destroyed("nihil perire de nostro"<sup>49</sup>). Nature, in this sense, is distinct from, although in an earlier explanation the term stood for man in his organic composition. Here it stands for the world viewed as the principle of operation. Nature is the earth, air, planets, and water continuing to act systematically according to their own essence until the moment arrives for them to revert by their very "nature" or essence to the one original substance, primal fire. "Quicquid composit, resolvit."<sup>50</sup>

With this explanation of Nature it is a simple matter to show the relation between Fate and Nature. In fact, Seneca indirectly mentions their identity by stating that people rail unjustly at Fate when a young person is carried away in death, for it is more fair that we obey Nature than that Nature obey us. "Objurgamus cotidie fatum: 'quare ille in medio cursu raptus est? Quare ille non rapitur? Quare senectutem et sibi et aliis gravem extendit?' Utrum, obsecro te, aequius iudicas te naturae an tibi parere naturam."<sup>51</sup> Very obviously Seneca uses these terms in the senses we have already offered. Fate and Nature are the same concept ultimately. For, in reality, by

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48 De Prov. 5.8

49 De Ben. 4.8.1

50 Ep. Mor. 30.12

51 Ep. Mor. 93.1-2

complaining of Fate we complain of the inevitability of death which is part of man's Nature. Fate, then, expresses the negation of immortality in man's physical composite, his Nature.

The same holds true if we view the world or the universe as a whole. It, too, operates according to a set plan of cause and effect (Fate) until a time when its principle of operation (Nature) grows weary of fulfilling its works and returns into primal fire.<sup>52</sup>

### SECTION C

#### FORTUNE

Of the four terms under consideration, intangibility renders Fortune by far the most difficult to grasp, analyze, and define. Here, as before, there are numerous references, some seventy in number, to this power in the universe. In this case, however, the references have greater extent of application. They also are used with greater vagueness and in more abstruse language. Naturally, there is no statement that even mildly approaches the form of a definition. A list of the references to Fortune included in the Appendix will make clear the variety of source material to be analyzed and then synthesized into one compact idea.

The first concept of general impression one receives when he hears Seneca speak of Fortune is that of adversity.

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52 De Ben. 4.8.1

Fortune seems to forbode evil, material loss, uneasiness, and dissatisfaction with life. Even Fate was never pictured as stern as Fortune. And Nature appeared in a favorable light, or was at least viewed indifferently as the existing order of things. Not Fortune, however. It is something that man must beware and guard against. This is a tone created by various striking passages. Is it really the picture that Seneca wished to leave, or will an investigation lead one to a different conclusion?

There can be no doubt that Fortune plays an important part in man's life. Seneca likes to picture it as a powerful force which leaves nothing free from assault. In fact, the more prosperous or brilliant a thing, man, or the state happens to be, the more subject it is to decline and destruction. "Quid enim est quod non fortuna, cum voluit, ex florentissimo detrahat? Quod non eo magis adgrediatur et quatiat quo speciosus fulget."<sup>53</sup> But everyone who puts trust in material things is bound by this power in some way or other. "Alium honores, alium opes vinciunt; quosdam nobilitas, quosdam humilitas premit; quibusdam aliena supra caput imperia sunt, quibusdam sua; quosdam exilia uno loco tenent, quosdam sacerdotia."<sup>54</sup> For all of these people life is a complete slavery.<sup>55</sup>

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53 Ep. Mor. 91.4

54 De Tranq. An. 10.3

55 De Tranq. An. 10.4



This last statement of Seneca, however, is conditioned by circumstances and a man's frame of mind. For material riches and prosperity are "adventicia et nutum fortunae sequentia."<sup>56</sup> Fortune also exercises her power only over those who desire to rely on her. "Non habet, ut putamus, fortuna longas manus; neminem occupat nisi haerentem sibi."<sup>57</sup> Even though Fortune might appear to have assisted a certain individual by providing great worldly possessions,<sup>58</sup> she still threatens him as much as she had previously assisted him.<sup>59</sup> Actually it is just at the time of success that a man should fear the violence of Fortune and prepare himself against it.<sup>60</sup>

It is true that Fortune frequently bestows external gifts, but it is precisely at this moment that one places himself in Fortune's grasp, for the individual has put his trust in something other than virtue which alone is the object of man's existence.

Nam qui aliquid virtute melius putat aut ullum praeter illam bonum, ad haec quae a fortuna sparguntur, sinum expandit et sollicitus missilia ejus expectat. Hanc enim imaginem animo tuo propone, ludos facere fortunam et in hunc mortalium coetum honores, divitias, gratiam excutere, quorum alia inter diripientium manus scissa sunt, alia infida societate divisa, alia magno detrimento eorum, in quos devenerant, prensa.<sup>61</sup>

This is a sad picture of enslavement to Fortune. It was in-

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56 De Constant. 5.7

57 Ep. Mor. 82.6

58 Ad Polyb. 18.3

59 Ep. Mor. 4.7

60 Ep. Mor. 18.6

61 Ep. Mor. 74.6-7

evitable; man had made an alliance with pleasure and refused to follow virtue alone.

Qui vero virtutis voluptatisque societatem facit et ne ex aequo quidem, fragilitate alterius boni quicquid in altero vigoris est hebetat libertatemque illam, ita demum, si nihil se pretiosius novit, invictam, sub iujum mittit. Nam, quae maxima servitus est, incipit illi opus esse fortuna.<sup>62</sup>

It is good to accept whatever Fortune offers, as Seneca himself did, as long as we remember that these things are transitory and insecure. "Quicquid a fortuna datum est, tamquam exempto auctore possideas."<sup>63</sup> Nevertheless, the best policy is not to trust Fortune at all. "Numquam ego fortunae credidi, etiam cum videretur pacem agere."<sup>64</sup> Seneca says this because no man is crushed by hostile Fortune who is not first deceived by her smiles.<sup>65</sup> But, if favorable Fortune, which also quickly shifts its favor,<sup>66</sup> gets one in her power, she ultimately brings him to ruin. "Illi qui munera ejus velut sua et perpetua amaverunt, qui se suspici propter illa voluerunt, iacent et maerent, cum vanos et pueriles animos omnis solidae voluptatis ignaros, falsa et mobilia oblectamenta destituunt."<sup>67</sup>

However, no one needs to place himself in Fortune's grasp. We are so constituted that we can and ought to seek riches within ourselves rather than from fortune.<sup>68</sup> In this

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62 De V. B. 15.3  
 63 Ad Marc. 10.3  
 64 Ad Helv. 5.4  
 65 Ad Helv. 5.4  
 66 Ad Polyb. 9.4  
 67 Ad Helv. 5.5  
 68 De Tranq. An. 9.2

indifference to things of Fortune lies true freedom. "Ergo exeundum ad libertatem est. Hanc non alia res tribuit quam fortunae neglegentia."<sup>69</sup> The best possible way to refuse these temptings of Fortune is the remembrance that Fortune has no power over one's character.<sup>70</sup> After all, what Fortune did not give she cannot take away.<sup>71</sup> And, as Seneca has said, true riches of character and peace of soul are found without the assistance of external riches and worldly advancement. In fact, virtue is the treasure of life, whereas Fortune's "gifts" can be sources of discomfort, sorrow, and discouragement, insofar as Fortune modifies the issues of even the best plans.<sup>72</sup> Thus the person with fewer possessions is less subject to Fortune's blows.<sup>73</sup> On the other hand, the man who engages in business on a gigantic scale is the more subject to Fortune.<sup>74</sup>

Since there is no place where Fortune cannot assault anyone,<sup>75</sup> the only safe harbor is scorn of the future, a firm stand, a readiness to receive Fortune's missiles full in the breast, neither skulking nor turning one's back.<sup>76</sup> And this man is safe because he has abandoned material things and protected himself within the impregnable wall of philosophy.

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69 De V. B. 4.5  
 70 Ep. Mor. 36.6  
 71 Ep. Mor. 59.18  
 72 De Ben. 5.2.2  
 73 De Tranq. An. 8.9  
 74 De Tranq. An. 13.2  
 75 De Tranq. An. 4.2  
 76 Ep. Mor. 104.22

"Philosophia circumdanda est, inexpugnabilis munus, quem fortuna multis machinis lacesitum non transit. In insuperabili loco stat animus, qui externa deseruit."<sup>77</sup> However, if Fortune has attempted to do battle with such an individual, she has always been ignominiously defeated.<sup>78</sup> This wise man never had to fear from Fortune<sup>79</sup> nor does he have to retreat from Fortune. He has nothing to lose from her.<sup>80</sup> He will parry her blows with ease<sup>81</sup> and with a serene mind<sup>82</sup> and an unruffled spirit<sup>83</sup> overcome Fortune by his virtue.<sup>84</sup> Since he has defeated Fortune, there can be no one above the wise man.<sup>85</sup> For now the vicissitudes of life have been subordinated to a higher principle, that of considering all honors, wealth, and material possessions as a hindrance rather than an aid to the acquirement of true happiness. Seneca felt that he himself had achieved a certain amount of success over Fortune since he despised riches when he had them and also when he lost them.<sup>86</sup> Over and above this, his contempt for her power extended into the entire realm of Fortune. "Totum fortunae regnum despiciam."<sup>87</sup> In this way he intimates that he has arrived at the state of bliss he is preaching in his many treatises, although he explicitly states,

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- 77 Ep. Mor. 82.5  
 78 De Constant. 8.3  
 79 De Prov. 6.6  
 80 De Tranq. An. 13.2  
 81 De Clem. 2.6.3  
 82 De Ira 3.25.4  
 83 Ad Marc. 5.6  
 84 Ep. Mor. 91.30  
 85 De Brev. V. 5.3  
 86 De V. B. 20.3  
 87 De V. B. 25.5

in all humility, that he is still far from the goal of perfect happiness which is derived from the practice of all the virtues.

In all the preceding quotations the diversity of Fortune's activities becomes apparent. Still, beneath all this there shines forth a certain unity. Fortune is some force which assaults everything in the world,<sup>88</sup> especially people who place their trust in worldly honors and material possessions. It is also a power capable of bestowing these gifts on mankind.<sup>89</sup> It seems, therefore, that Fortune is nothing more than the changing circumstances in a man's life. The stress, however, is very definitely placed on the loss of honors and possessions. For these are more subject to human fickleness, weakness, and malice. Whereas these material goods are more liable to be lost, peace of soul can be permanent because the virtuous or wise man does not rely on anything material. He knows that true riches are to be found within his own heart, while external, material things are purely transitory.

This is the summation of all Seneca's references to Fortune, but still we ask, "What is Fortune?" Is it a material force in the universe exercising its power over human puppets? Is it a person controlling the destinies of his creatures? Or is it merely a name given loosely by Seneca to indicate the

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88 Ad Marc. 26.6

89 De Clem. 1.1.2

loss of material things or to point out occurrences which are without apparent meaning and explanation?<sup>90</sup> This last seems to be most logical from all the foregoing passages, but it is also the most difficult to fit into any pattern with the conclusions arrived at in the analysis of Fate and Nature. Seneca, as stated before, nowhere answers this question himself. What Fortune means to him is best stated in the oft repeated quotation: "Sic nunc naturam voca fatum, fortunam; omnia ejusdem dei nomina sunt varie utentis sua potestate."<sup>91</sup> And this reference cannot be fully understood until all four terms are examined, especially in the light of Seneca's words on the important word deus. Fortune, in particular, has a real meaning and existence only when identified with deus.<sup>92</sup> It is impossible, therefore, to reach any further conclusion until the last word under consideration is studied in completest detail.

#### SECTION D

##### GOD

When cataloguing all the references Seneca gives to the deity, one is immediately conscious of two things, his practicality and apparent lack of exactness and consistency. Seneca is practical because he was a moralist above all else. But also, as is the case with many men who do not have clear

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90 E. Vernon Arnold, Roman Stoicism, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1911, 210

91 De Ben. 4.8.3

92 Arnold, 209

concepts of very fundamental principles, Seneca's explanations were directed to the solution of an immediate case without attempting to reconcile his present answer to a previously elaborated explanation on somewhat the same matter.

Seneca speaks at times almost as if he had been a disciple and believer in Christianity, perhaps through the teaching of the apostle St. Paul. He says, for instance, that God, who is the Father of us all, has placed ready to our hands those things which he intended for our own good; he did not wait for any search on our part, and he gave them to us voluntarily.<sup>93</sup> As a benefactor, then, he would be greater than the recipient of his gifts, but Seneca elsewhere states that man is on a level with God if he only possesses perfect reason.<sup>94</sup> According to Christian thought it is impossible to reconcile any equality between God and man. Thus, Seneca adds to his and our confusion by speaking on the one hand of the Fatherhood of God, and then on the other of the equality of man and God in all but immortality.<sup>95</sup> Having in mind the solution of people's problems, Seneca very likely gave no thought to the inconsistency that arose in his doctrines. Or, if he did consider such discrepancies, he knew of no way to solve the difficulties which he himself unknowingly proposed. We find a typical example in the case of the same God who previously, unasked, lavished his

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93 Ep. Mor. 110.10

94 Ep. Mor. 124.21

95 De Constant. 8.2

gifts on us, failing to heed our earnest prayers.<sup>96</sup> Later on Seneca changes this attitude when he argues that people would not supplicate God if he were deaf and ineffectual, or if his benefits were not bestowed on those who sought them.<sup>97</sup> God in one instance hears our prayers and even grants our desires before we ask for anything. With equal definiteness in another set of circumstances we hear him saying it is a waste of time to pray to God, for he will not hear or answer our petitions.

The only possible way to arrive at a well-defined picture of the deity in the midst of these contradictions is to list whatever attributes Seneca assigns to his Supreme Being and determine the spiritual or material essence whence these powers flow. The investigation will reveal, in other words, what God does and what God is.

The deity of Seneca resembles in many ways the God of the Christians in the manifestation of his qualities. First of all, God is the master builder of the universe who preserves all things by his power and "*conservat artifex fragilitatem materiae vi sua vincens.*"<sup>98</sup> Still, he does not violate the course of Fate, or the series of cause and effect, once he has ordained the definite nature of a certain creature.<sup>99</sup> "Deo

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96 De Ira 2.30.2  
 97 De Ben. 4.4.2  
 98 Ep. Mor. 58.28  
 99 De Prov. 5.9



agente"<sup>100</sup> the universe moves on its prearranged schedule and "manent cuncta, non quia aeterna sunt, sed quia defenduntur cura regentis."<sup>101</sup> In this function God evidently is "omnia habentem, omnia tribuentem, beneficum gratis."<sup>102</sup> Manifesting this care for his creatures, "Deus quoque quaedam munera universo humano generi dedit, a quibus excluditur nemo."<sup>103</sup> For a moment, too, Seneca wishes us to ponder how much God, our loving parent, has given to us.<sup>104</sup> For in the world about us the artifex has cared that each object has its own distinctive features ("nulli non et color proprius est et figura sua et magnitudo"<sup>105</sup>). And certainly it must be attributed to the remarkable genius of the divine creator that amid all this abundance there is no repetition.<sup>106</sup>

Upon man in particular the deity wished to pour his favors. To him he gave the wonderful faculty of ratio by which man partook of the nature of God himself and became the lord of the world. "Duas deus res dedit, quae illum obnoxium validissimum facerent, rationem et societatem; itaque qui par esse nulli posset, si seduceretur, rerum potitur."<sup>107</sup> Having given this fellowship with himself, God has greater watch over

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- 100 Ep. Mor. 71.12  
 101 Ep. Mor. 58.28  
 102 Ep. Mor. 95.48  
 103 De Ben. 4.28.3  
 104 De Ben. 2.29.4  
 105 Ep. Mor. 113.15  
 106 Ep. Mor. 113.16  
 107 De Ben. 4.18.3

rational creatures. "Nihil deo clusum est. Interest animis nostris et cogitationibus mediis intervenit."<sup>108</sup> And there God is the "malorum bonorumque nostrorum observator et custos."<sup>109</sup> Moreover, to show his interest in mankind he disciplines those whom he loves<sup>110</sup> when they have need of a stimulus to practice virtue.

After listening to Seneca speak of the deity in this fashion, one feels that God is truly parens noster, guiding us with a loving hand in the whole span of our life. We have visions of a personal, kind, loving father providentially controlling the events of our life and we seek to know yet more about him. Seneca gives one reason to wonder and then to doubt about the truth of this picture, however, because he hesitates to say what God actually is, and then even describes him in a very materialistic tone. Seneca states openly that our intellectual faculty will tell us what the gods are. "Quid sint di qualesque declarat(ratio)."<sup>111</sup> Still, he does not explain what his reason has pointed out. Certainly it is the part of a wise man, which Seneca was striving to become, to study the universe, its beginnings, and its artifex. Thus he asks with amazement: "Non quaeram quis sit istius artifex mundi?"<sup>112</sup>

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108 Ep. Mor. 83.1

109 Ep. Mor. 41.2

110 De Prov. 4.7

111 Ep. Mor. 90.28

112 Ep. Mor. 65.19

But he passes on without studying the artifex mundi. In another place he expresses again the importance of knowing God's essence,<sup>113</sup> but fails to say more on the subject. The same question is introduced in other passages<sup>114</sup> with the same result.

Certainly even with Seneca's lack of directness all that has just been mentioned leads to one conclusion thus far. When God possesses, allots, bestows, controls, views, corrects everything in the universe, we have attributes that unite perfectly to form a spiritual "rectorem custodemque universi, animum ac spiritum mundi, operis hujus dominum et artificem."<sup>115</sup> Moreover, when asking what the one true cause was, Seneca responds "ratio scilicet faciens, id est deus."<sup>116</sup> Besides "sacer intra nos spiritus sedet,"<sup>117</sup> who again is God, since Seneca has just finished saying that "prope a te deus, tecum est, intus est."<sup>118</sup>

This language, taken in itself, tells clearly enough that Seneca believed in the spiritual essence of God. If God is the causa or animus or ratio faciens or sacer spiritus, then Seneca seems to be following the Christian concept of God. The

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113 De Brev. V. 19.1

114 De Otio 4.2; Ad Helv. 8.3

115 Quaest. Nat. 2.45.2

116 Ep. Mor. 65.12

117 Ep. Mor. 41.2

118 Ep. Mor. 41.1

casual observer would immediately concur in this opinion since Seneca says in several letters that there are corporeal and incorporeal beings,<sup>119</sup> and that our intellect is capable of fixing its attention on the incorporeal.<sup>120</sup> Seneca maintains also that "duo esse in rerum natura ex quibus omnia fiant, causam et materiam."<sup>121</sup> Matter lies inert, ready for any use, but surely to stay as it is if not acted upon the Efficient Cause. For "causa autem, id est ratio, materiam format et quocumque vult versat, ex illa varia opera producit."<sup>122</sup> This causa or ratio, as we have seen, is God. Later on in this same letter Seneca repeats this. "Universa ex materia et ex Deo constant...Potentius autem est ac pretiosius quod facit, quod est deus, quam materia patiens dei."<sup>123</sup> God, therefore, is distinct from matter and is the Cause forming matter. Since another name for causa is ratio and deus, one still retains the concept of the spirituality of God's essence. The answer would be reached and the investigation completed if Seneca had stopped here. But he did not. For again we are confronted with a series of contradictions that demand further study.

Whereas up to this point God has been covered with the robe of spirituality, we now discover the shadow of materialism changing the original hues of this robe. Seneca had admitted

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119 Ep. Mor. 58.11  
 120 Ep. Mor. 90.29  
 121 Ep. Mor. 65.2  
 122 Ep. Mor. 65.2  
 123 Ep. Mor. 65.23

the distinction between corporeal and incorporeal substances, leading one to think that he acknowledged the existence of a spiritual essence or nature in the deity. However, following his usual line of inconsistency, Seneca denies his previous statements by recognizing the existence of material or corporeal substances only. He does not directly postulate this in any one place, but the numerous suggestions to and applications of such a principle leaves no doubt but that he believed it to be true. The general principle which Seneca follows assumes that whatever is capable of acting or being acted upon alone is possessed of any reality. The contention that only corporeal objects exist is reached by restricting the power of acting or being acted upon to purely material things.

God, as the ruler, guardian, soul, breath, lord, and master-builder of the world, possesses force and power at his command. The very names used to describe God signify his position and his activity. But for Seneca "*cui tanta vis est ut impellat et cogat et retineat et inhibeat, corpus est.*"<sup>124</sup> This, indeed, is not the only passage which shows that the deity is nothing more than matter. For Seneca reaffirms his conviction that whatever possesses the principle of activity is purely material and does not rise above anything else in the universe. He says in Letter 106: "*Quod facit, corpus est.*"<sup>125</sup>

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124 Ep. Mor. 106.9

125 Ep. Mor. 106.4

This sets the stage for a very similar statement in a subsequent letter, in which he writes: "Quidquid facit, corpus est."<sup>126</sup> Since God under his many titles is ultimately the causa efficiens, then, he too is material in essence because, again, everything which acts is material.

Seneca comes yet closer to this position when he affirms in Letter 95: "Omne hoc quod vides, quo divina atque humana conclusa sunt, unum est; membra sumus corporis magni."<sup>127</sup> Whatever exists, therefore, whether it be God or man is of the same nature as anything else that exists. More than this. They are not only of the same nature. They are also extensions of the same body, not even possessing the quality of strict individuality. Seneca has to admit this because in answer to his own question as to whether matter is continuous, full, and all-pervading, or separated and mixed in with Void he says that "nihil usque inane est."<sup>128</sup> "Body" thus spreads continuously throughout the universe without rip or gap. The universe, in reality, is the sole existing reality, consisting of matter, which is divided into divina and humana according to the varying aspects under which we are viewing the universe.

We find the same idea contained in yet another passage. Seneca holds again that "totum hoc, quo continemur, et unum est

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126 Ep. Mor. 117.2

127 Ep. Mor. 95.52

128 Quaest. Nat. 3.16.5

et deus; et socii sumus et membra."<sup>129</sup> It is not surprising to find him making the universe one continuous body and calling us mere expressions of its multiformity. However, it would be difficult to accept the statement that deus is actually the material, corporeal universe unless we had the explanation by Seneca himself in the passage already referred to and in his rather general, though, we must admit, clear confession that if "vis illum vocare mundum, non falleris."<sup>130</sup>

Seneca also links the words deus, mundus, and rector universi into one picture to signify their materiality. "Nam mundus quoque cuncta complectens rectorque universi deus in exteriora quidem tendit, sed tamen introrsum undique in se redit."<sup>131</sup> The passage conveys the idea that the world, which is God, by a series of mutations produced other objects and then by a reverse process resolved them again into itself.

Upon occasion God was also called parens noster<sup>132</sup> as if he were our begetter, protector, and benefactor. To give an even more personal touch Seneca gave the author of the universe the name Pater Liber because he was then to be taken specifically as our begetter: "quia omnium parens sit."<sup>133</sup> Yet this same term parens is applied to the mundus when Seneca

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129 Ep. Mor. 92.30

130 Quaest. Nat. 2.45.2

131 De V. B. 8.4

132 De Ben. 2.29.4

133 De Ben. 4.8.1

writes: "Unus omnium parens mundus est."<sup>134</sup> If these quotations are taken as Seneca gave them to us, there can be no question that deus and mundus are one and the same concept. Different names are used merely to point out the various functions of the one great world body. God is divested of all personal paternity and woven into a nameless mass for which "nomina proprie apta-bis vim aliquam effectumque caelestium rerum continentia."<sup>135</sup> God's names, therefore, are as endless as the operations of the universe.

Several further investigations, while not as conclusive as those already offered, can be construed to signify the materialistic tone beneath Seneca's words. In urging Lucilius to accept whatever span of life is assigned to him Seneca would have his "magnus animus deo pareat et quicquid lex universi jubet, sine cunctatione patiatur."<sup>136</sup> Unless we wish to twist Seneca's words into meaning that there are two supreme powers, deus and lex universi, we must conclude that the two are again just Seneca's way of saying the same thing in slightly altered language to suit the situation. The lex universi means, according to the context, the order and regularity of the universe itself, which ordains all creatures to complete their earthly span at some destined time. It is the universe, in reality,

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134 De Ben. 3.28.2

135 De Ben. 4.7.2

136 Ep. Mor. 71.16



"quodammodo se habens." When we obey God, therefore, we are also enduring whatsoever the universe is ordering. Again God is taken as the universe.

Striving to elevate the nature of man Seneca has unconsciously destroyed the lofty position of his deity. In many passages Seneca stresses the dignity of man to such an extent he makes him an equal to God in all save immortality.<sup>137</sup> In one outstanding passage we find: "Haec duo(deus, homo) quae rationalia sunt, eandem naturam habent, illo diversa sunt, quod alterum immortale, alterum mortale est."<sup>138</sup> And even this quality does not affect a man's present security, for "scit non multum esse ab homine timendum, a deo nihil."<sup>139</sup> It stands to reason that, having nothing to fear from God and having the same nature, man is not only equal to God, but he is actually part of the deity. How this can be possible, since many individual persons walk the earth, remains for the pantheistic philosophers to explain. Seneca does not touch upon this point. Still, with the words found in this selection, man must at the very least be a manifestation of the deity or a membra dei. Whatever pertains, therefore, to the nature of man will automatically be predicated of God as well. Likewise, to be logical, we must bestow god-like attributes on man, immortality ex-

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137 De Prov. 1.6; De Constant. 8.2; Ep. Mor. 53.11

138 Ep. Mor. 124.14

139 De Ben. 7.1.7

cepted.

More specifically can we evaluate the soul of man from this same viewpoint. According to Seneca "Quid aliud voces hunc(animum) quam deum in corpore humano hospitantem?"<sup>140</sup> The soul is God living in man. In a later letter Seneca asks another rhetorical question. "Quid enim est aliud animus quam quodam modo se habens spiritus?"<sup>141</sup> If one would stop here, he would interpret spiritus as an immaterial substance called the soul. However, in the very next sentence it is revealed that "tanto spiritum esse faciliorem omni alia materia, quanto tenuior est."<sup>142</sup> The transition is quite clear. The spiritus is matter, if in a somewhat rarified form. Spiritus is also the animus, which, in turn, is God residing in man. Or to look at the same analysis in diagrammatic form: Deus - Animus in homine - Spiritus - Materia(tenuior). In one short set of deductions, therefore, we find man and God alike are purely material beings.

After this investigation we are now faced with two sets of contradictory explanations. At one time greater prominence is given to the spiritual, at another to the material side of Seneca's conception of God. It would seem that selections,

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140 Ep. Mor. 31.11  
 141 Ep. Mor. 50.6  
 142 Ep. Mor. 50.6

listing God as distinct from matter, and speaking of corporeal and incorporeal substances, would form a spiritual basis for the Christian attributes predicated of God. For Seneca calls God the Master Builder, and then a lavish benefactor. Man, in particular, has received the highest gift possible, his intellect, from God, who then takes up his home in man's soul, marking the good deeds and correcting those souls that he loves. To offset these spiritual and Christian fundamentals of God comes the astounding revelation that God is the first cause and so is purely corporeal since Cause for Seneca is active and so is made up of matter. Going hand in hand with this explanation is the belief that God is parens noster when we understand that parens noster is likewise the world itself. In fact, we too are deus and materia because the world is an unum quid, of which we are all members, though brought forth in various forms. Finally, God resides in man as his soul. This soul, however, called the spiritus hominis, is still nothing more than matter, even if it is in a rarified state.

These are the two pictures placed before us. It would be difficult to form any conclusion on the basis of this treatment of deus alone, but, when these explanations are weighed in view of Seneca's teachings on Fate, Nature, and Fortune, and in the light of his whole philosophical background, a definite answer is made possible. The following chapter will determine whether the spiritual or the material is the correct conception

of the deity by seeing which is the more compatible with the other three terms Seneca used as synonyms for deus, and by deciding which is the more consistent with Seneca's philosophical background and his other philosophical beliefs.

## CHAPTER V

### DECISION RENDERED

After the consideration of Seneca's use of deus in the preceding chapter one can understand why it is possible to confuse the nature of the divinity. However, because of the investigation made previously into Seneca's philosophical background and into the terms used synonymously with deus, we can be certain that we have discovered the meaning Seneca intended for God when we say deus is nothing more than the material universe itself. Seneca's philosophy, therefore, must be called materialistic and pantheistic. In reality, then, Seneca, differs in no way from the Stoics that preceded him. By giving a brief résumé of the basic ethical and metaphysical concepts at stake, and by reconsidering the terms Fate, Nature, Fortune, and God in their connection with Seneca's philosophical background, the correctness of this decision will become apparent.

As the last chapter stated, the basic meaning of the word deus cannot be reached by knowing the usage of that solitary word. However, from that word alone one can start the analysis into the materiality or spirituality of God's nature. For, in spite of the inconsistent wording in applying the term deus, Seneca did leave a clue to the ultimate nature of God.

If one will only review the analysis of deus, he will find that when God is performing some action the spiritual side of his nature is more in focus. God creates, preserves, assists, corrects, and loves all his creatures. By these activities the picture of a personalized and rationalized God is given to us. On the other hand, when Seneca uses more basic concepts we have stronger arguments for the materiality of God. For only material things exist, the world is our Father and is God, and the universe is the whole of which everything else is but a part.

Even if we had not said definitely as yet what God is, we could tentatively draw certain conclusions from the foregoing paragraph. For the spiritual aspect of God results from the operations of God. The quotations themselves show that in this activity God is considered from an ethical standpoint. However, in the field of metaphysics we notice the materiality of God's essence. For we remember that only corporeal things exist and that God is the universe which diffuses itself into many different shapes and activities. It is at just this very point that the inconsistency of Seneca regarding the deity shows itself in boldest outline. His ethical treatment of God contradicts the physical and metaphysical concept of the same deity. Since the field of ethics presupposes the study of metaphysics, we can presume, on this count, that Seneca held the materiality of all things, including God.

By reconsidering Fate, Nature, and Fortune we discover that there is nothing which is inconsistent with this material view of God's essence, but that there is nothing to favor any Christianized interpretation of these words. We have seen that Fate is called the first cause and the chain of causes that flows from it in a series of unchangeable events. Since the first cause for Seneca is the causa efficiens, and, since whatever acts is material, this first cause is also material. Nature, again, is taken under a double aspect of materiality. It is meant to signify, first of all, the physical universe as a life-giving principle and then as the universe itself in its physical makeup. Secondly, Nature stands for an individual man's human nature as it exists after its formation by this life-giving principle. Since, in this light, man's nature is just an efflux or a manifestation of Nature in its broader aspect, it too is just as material as the source of its existence. Besides, the universe can only be corporeal because it is the ultimate principle of existence, endowed with activity. As such the universe must follow Seneca's premise that "quidquid facit, corpus est."<sup>1</sup>

The problem of giving intrinsic meanings to Fortune almost defies solution. However, since the references to Fortune occur most frequently in passages complaining of the loss of material possessions, the most common concept for Fortune is

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1 Ep. Mor. 117.2

nothing more than the ebb and flow of wealth and worldly goods. Whether Seneca meant anything else when speaking of Fortune no one apparently has ventured to say. Few will go even as far as Arnold does when he says Fortune "has no existence in the absolute sense of the term. But in practical life, and from the limited point of view of the individual concerned, fortune is everywhere met with."<sup>2</sup> Moreover, just how this term assists in the interpretation of the deity is not at all as certain as the other terms applied by Seneca to the Supreme Being. Yet, Seneca obviously saw some connection between Fortune and God, for, otherwise, how could he make the statement: "Sic nunc naturam voca fatum fortunam; omnia ejusdem dei nomina sunt varie utentis sua potestate"<sup>3</sup> In some sense this quotation might be construed to signify the material universe insofar as the things acquired and lost are all material possessions and part of the universe. If the universe is another name for God, then the increase or loss of one's possessions could more poetically be called the favor or onslaught of Fortune. Moreover, this argument is in line with the general usage of Fortune, which implies harshness, lack of feeling, uneasiness, insecurity, and evil. These ideas certainly contradict the ethical concept of God proposed by Seneca, for that deity is to be loving, guiding, and provident. Nor can he harm anyone since he is all-good.<sup>4</sup>

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2 Arnold, 209

3 De Ben. 4.8.3

4 Ep. Mor. 75.17



These notes of foreboding ascribed by Seneca to Fortune, however, would suit an unthinking and unfeeling universe that gives no care to the individual creatures in its domain. It was this lack of individual attention that led Arnold to call Fortune "the absence of both tendency and purpose, which results in a constant shifting and fro"<sup>5</sup> of one's material possessions.

In another sense Seneca looks upon Fortune as the unpredictable force giving, or, more especially, taking away one's worldly possessions. We hear nothing more about this force to learn its nature, but since for Seneca any name implying force indicates God, and since Fortune is a force, then on this score also Fortune can be called God. Then we must resort to the prime principle of all Seneca's physics that whatever acts, or exerts force, is comprised of matter. This again would show Seneca's idea of Fortune was intimately linked with the notion of materiality.

More likely than not Seneca had a confused idea of both these views in his mind when he spoke of Fortune. At one time the idea of force was more prevalent; at another the shift of material things, as affected by force, received greater stress. Whatever view is adopted, either one is consonant with the materialistic and pantheistic structure of the universe. In no way, however, is it possible to adjust Fortune to the spiritual-

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5 Arnold, 199

istic or the ethical concept of God.

Although Seneca's doctrines and background reflect the teachings of different schools of philosophy, the Stoic doctrines on the divinity alone resemble the explanations proffered at random by Seneca to assist in teaching some principle of life. The Cynics, it was noted earlier, can be used merely as a negative norm for Seneca's ideas since for them God was something unknown and remote from mankind. Following the same line of reasoning, they also considered all worship a matter of contempt. In contrast to this, however, Seneca would have people cultivate the greatest respect toward God.

The Epicureans, even though Seneca showed a special predilection for certain doctrines they proposed, based their notions about God on other concepts which Seneca perforce could not follow. The Epicureans' physics postulated atoms and void as the ultimates of the universe, whereas Seneca held the universe to be one large body with no empty spaces interspersed between bodies. "Nihil usque inane est."<sup>6</sup> In this way the Epicurean gods were merely a fortuitous cluster of atoms possessed of no power or added dignity. Opposed to this, Seneca holds that nothing is separate from the universe. Whatever exists is either directly or indirectly part of that seamless body. Contrary also to the Epicurean physics and metaphysics

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6 Quaest. Nat. 3.16.5

which placed many gods far from men in the intermundia and which tried to explain away all necessity of gods, Seneca brought his God close to men and attempted to make him a powerful force in men's lives.

It is to the Sextian and Stoic doctrines that a marked parallel can be seen in Seneca's teachings. In fact, the analysis of Chapter Four resolves itself into the Stoic doctrines listed in Chapter Two. In the earlier chapter Stoicism was found to be materialism and pantheism combined into one. Seneca, likewise, must fall into this category because he too expresses the same sentiments and opinions of the early Stoics.

The Stoics refused to divorce, or even to distinguish, mind and matter, or to exalt the soul by opposing it to the body. Hence they asserted that nothing exists which is not corporeal or material, though they immediately qualified this statement by maintaining that there is nothing corporeal which is passive or inert and that all activity implies a LOGOS or spiritual principle. The absolute antagonism of a purely active form and a purely passive, which is the crux of the Aristotelian philosophy, is thus set aside; and in its place we have the relative opposition of two elements, both of which are regarded as having ultimately the same nature and origin and both of which are viewed as in one aspect, material and in another spiritual.

This is a compendium of the early Stoics and is also a condensed edition of the doctrines of Seneca. For both Zeno and Seneca admit that the only reality is corporeality, which is everything that acts or is acted upon since this is the primary note of reality. And this corporeality or matter is also possessed of ratio to explain the order in the universe.

Neither the early Stoics nor Seneca saw, or cared to see, the patent contradiction between ratio, a spiritual faculty, and matter as the sole existing reality. That is why Seneca can in an emotional moment call God a "sacer intra nos spiritus"<sup>8</sup> and later in calm reasoning write "unus omnium parens mundus est."<sup>9</sup> "This fact that the primitive matter is characterized by reason and activity deprives the Stoic materialism of what would otherwise be a baneful influence, and explains how the Stoic ethics and also the Stoical theology should be so highly spiritualistic as they unquestionably are."<sup>10</sup> Yet, this principle does not free Stoicism and Seneca from an identical contradictory note in their teaching, although it does establish the existence of a closely knit alliance between the author and the school.

Finally, it has been pointed out that both the Stoics and Seneca hold the ultimate identity of God with the world, and say that any name denoting God is merely another aspect of the power-laden matter which comprises the universe. For, Seneca and before him "Zeno taught that God is Body, but it was not a dead stuff which constituted the world. The thing which Zeno was concerned above others to affirm was that this stuff was actually Reason. The universe is a living being."<sup>11</sup> These two notes point out at once the dynamistic materiality of the deity.

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8 Ep. Mor. 41.2  
 9 De Ben. 3.28.2  
 10 Davidson, 93  
 11 Bevan, 42

Thus upon a closer analysis the conflict between the materialistic and idealistic conception of God disappears. God, according to Seneca, is only real when he has a material form. Therefore, even when he is called animus or ratio, these names do not exclude but rather presuppose that these concepts have bodies. Seneca, in other words, is only following the tenets of Stoicism when he pronounces it indifferent whether God is regarded as fatum or divinus spiritus.<sup>12</sup> Nor is it a surprise after this to understand that Seneca is called a Stoic. For, although he uses Pythagoras and Epicurus as authorities to press home single truths, yet he boasts in over twenty passages that he himself should be labelled a Stoic.<sup>13</sup> From this evidence it could be presumed quite logically that Seneca, who prized the name of Stoic to that extent, would be a disciple of this school in such a basic matter as the ultimate nature of the universe and of God.

In following this Stoic school Seneca has made it clear that ultimately there is no difference between God and primary matter; both are one and the same substance. When regarded as the universal substratum, it is known as just matter, but when considered as acting force, is called spiritus, natura, animus, ratio, fatum, and deus. Nor are matter and force distinct essences. Actually force is inherent in matter. The force is

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12 Ad Helv. 8.3

13 Confer the appendix for an elaboration of this point

something material, is identical with matter. Thus, the difference mentioned in Chapter Four between efficient cause and material cause (God and matter) is no more than the difference between spiritus and its elements, which is no difference at all. For, both Stoics and Seneca maintain that every particular element has in process of time developed from primary fire, or God, and to God it will return at the end of every period of the world. It is in this sense that Seneca ascribes the name of Hercules to God "quia vis ejus invicta sit quandoque lassata fuerit operibus editis, in ignem recessura."<sup>14</sup> But, taking the deity in its full meaning, we have primary matter, as well as primary force. The sum total of all that is real is the divine Breath, moving forth from itself and returning to itself again. "Deus in exteriora quidem tendit, sed tamen introrsum undique in se redit."<sup>15</sup> Therefore, the deity itself is the primary fire, the primal substance changing into various individual elements, and then back into itself. When viewed in itself, the primary material force is the whole of the deity. However, the things into which this primary substance has changed are only indirectly divine and possessed of deity. Still, in a very true sense any part of the world may have divinity predicated of it. What is not immediately divine is a manifestation of the original matter. Then, when everything reverts to the divine material unity, there is no longer any distinction between what was originally divine and what was a part or a manifes-

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<sup>14</sup> De Ben. 4.8.1

<sup>15</sup> De V. B. 8.4

tation of the divinity.

As a summation of the foregoing we quote Zeller in his Stoics, Epicureans, and Sceptics.

The Stoics admitted no essential difference between God and the world. Their system was therefore strictly Pantheistic. The world is the sum of all real existence, and all real existence is originally contained in deity, which is at once the matter of everything and the creative force which moulds this matter into particular individual substances. We can, therefore, think of nothing which is not either immediately deity or a manifestation of deity. In point of essence, therefore, God and the world are the same; indeed, the two conceptions are declared by the Stoics to be absolutely identical. If they have nevertheless to be distinguished, the distinction is only derivative and partial. The same universal Being is called God when it is regarded as a whole, World when it is regarded as progressive in the many forms assumed in the course of its development. The difference, therefore, is tantamount to assigning a difference of meaning to the term world, according as it is used to express the whole of what exists, or only the derivative part.<sup>16</sup>

Although the word "Stoics" is employed throughout this quotation, Seneca's name can be supplied without any violation of meaning since his position in this case is exactly that of the Stoic school of thought. The analysis conducted in Chapter Four has shown that Seneca's words admit this Stoic interpretation without any difficulty.

In view of the many arguments offered we can classify under four headings the evidence which leads one to accept without reserve the pantheistic nature of Seneca's universe and the universal materialism of his Supreme Being.

(1) It is true that the ethical concept of God can be

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16 Zeller, Stoics, Epicureans, and Sceptics, 156-8

given a spiritual interpretation; however, "you cannot have ethical doctrine without a basis of physical and metaphysical doctrine. You can have no rule of conduct without some view of the universe wherein the action is to take place."<sup>17</sup> Thus, God used as a motivation for a good moral life and considered in his relations to men resembles the God the Christians adored. Yet, more basically in the examination of the physical universe Seneca states his belief in the existence of matter alone. Nothing, not even God, is excluded from this postulate.

(2) Fate, Nature, and Fortune, the synonyms for God, can all be construed as parts or aspects or special phases of the material universe, but cannot make sense if they are to be endowed with a spiritual meaning.

(3) Although Seneca's philosophical background was varied, there is a distinct resemblance between his words on the deity and those spoken by the members of the Stoic school. And, since the Stoics are commonly known to be materialists and pantheists, though in Seneca's time the pantheism of the Stoics did adopt a more personalized concept of the universe and spoke of God as Creator, Father, and Guardian, so Seneca's words can be given a no more elevated meaning than the pantheism they copy.

(4) The appendix lists more than twenty references to Seneca's profession of Stoicism. From this admission we might

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17 Bevan, 31



presume that on such a large issue as the meaning of God he would agree with the school with which he indicates he is affiliated. Of course, this argument taken by itself could prove nothing, but it helps to strengthen the conclusions already reached in the first three arguments.

Since all the evidence proposed indicates that Seneca called himself a Stoic, that his teachings have a materialistic core, and that his words in all essentials run parallel with the Stoic concept of God, we can, therefore, classify Seneca as a true Stoic and discredit any spiritual interpretation of his words. No matter how Christian his words may sound upon occasion, they still retain the ultimate materialism and pantheism of the Stoic philosophers. For the basic explanation of the world for Seneca never transcends sheer materiality. Beautiful and stirring though they may be, the words of Seneca in the last analysis mean no more than the more direct arguments given Zeno to his followers centuries before. Seneca may have the enthusiasm of St. Paul and he may parallel the words of Scripture, but he still remains Seneca the materialist and pantheist. And his deity will never be anything more than the wide sweep of the material universe. Even though classical students of every century cease not to wonder how such elevated language could flow from a mind steeped in Stoicism and are drawn to find the solution to apparent contradictions and inconsistency, the answer will always be found to be the same. God is the Universe and the Universe is God.

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## APPENDIX

## SECTION A

FATEDE PROVIDENTIA

- 5.6 Fate is the set law of things.  
 5.8 We are swept along by Fate  
 5.8 Fate is inexorable; even God is ruled by Fate.

AD MARCIAM DE CONSOLATIONE

- 21.6 The Fates go their way and do not add or subtract from the promised span of life.

DE BREVITATE VITAE

- 11.1 Old men think that they deceive Fate just as they deceive themselves when they believe they have more years yet to live.

AD POLYBIUM DE CONSOLATIONE

- 1.4 All men have an end. This universality dulls the cruelty of Fate.  
 4.1 We cannot change Fate.  
 11.1 It is not due to an unjust Fate that we die. We were only permitted to live in the first place.  
 11.3 The Fates take all in death sooner or later.

AD HELVIAM DE CONSOLATIONE

- 15.3 Fate contrived that Helvia would not be with Seneca in exile.

DE BENEFICIIS

- 4.7.2 Fate is a connected chain of causes.

EPISTULAE MORALES

- 19.6 Fate is woven from a succession of causes.  
 63.14 Fate cares nothing for age. It just takes men off.  
 76.23 A good man patiently accepts Fate.  
 77.12 Fate arranged the span of life. Do not pray for more days.  
 93.1 We rail at Fate for cutting off a man's life, but it is better for us to obey Nature.  
 91.15 Be reconciled to Fate by which all things are ruled and dissolved.  
 101.7 Our death is set by remorseless Fate.  
 107.12 The great souled man is one who gives himself over to Fate.

## SECTION B

NATUREDE PROVIDENTIA

- 5.8 Let Nature deal with matter as she pleases.  
6.8 It is easy to renounce Nature. Commit suicide.

DE CONSTANTIA

- 19.3 Keep the post in life that Nature assigned you.

DE IRA

- 1.5.3 He has the least knowledge of Nature who ascribes the vice of anger to men.  
1.17.2 Nature has given us sufficient equipment in reason to control our lives.  
2.11.4 Nature ordains that that which is great by the fear it instils in others also fears something else.  
2.20.2 It is hard to change Nature since the elements combine in us at birth.

DE CLEMENTIA

- 1.19.1 Power is not harmful if it is according to Nature's law. For Nature had set up kingship in the case of the bees and other creatures.

AD MARCIAM DE CONSOLATIONE

- 1.6 Time is Nature's healer of sorrows.  
7.1 Nature bids us grieve for our dear ones.  
16.1 Nature has not dealt grudgingly with woman's nature.  
20.1 Death is a great discovery of Nature.  
22.3 Nature treats those most kindly whom she early removes from life.

DE VITA BEATA

- 8.1 We must use Nature as our guide. Reason heeds her.  
15.5 Every hardship comes by a law of Nature.

DE OTIO

- 5.1 Nature begot us for contemplation and action.  
5.3 Nature begot us to be spectators of her beauty.

DE TRANQUILLITATE ANIMI

- 7.2 Work is in vain where Nature objects.  
10.2 Nature made habit an alleviation for disasters.  
11.7 Nature hemmed us in with sickness, disaster, but this is not unexpected.  
15.6 In misfortune have the measure of sorrow that Nature (and not custom) prescribes.

DE BREVI TATE VITAE

- 1.1 Some say Nature is spiteful in giving a short span of life.
- 12.4 They wastetime and twist Nature who sing or hum their worthless tunes.

AD POLYBIUM DE CONSOLATIONE

- 1.1 Nature brings all things by her laws to destruction.
- 1.4 Death or the end comes to all by the law of Nature. This universality dulls the cruelty of this Fate.
- 4.3 Nature has decreed a life of sorrow; man's first act at birth is to cry.
- 10.4-6 Nature gives loans, not possessions (for all must die).
- 11.1 No one is exempt from Nature's law of death.
- 15.3 Nature destined Augustus for heaven, but not even he escaped sorrow.

AD HELVIAM DE CONSOLATIONE

- 5.1 Nature intended that we need little for happiness.
- 6.8 The law of Nature governs movement of the planets.
- 10.11 Nothing satisfies greed; very little satisfies Nature.

DE BENEFICIIS

- 1.1.11 Nature begets progeny.
- 2.29.3 Nature does not suffer certain qualities in same person; so people complain.
- 4.12.5 The heavens fulfill their office in the fixed order of Nature.
- 6.23.6 Nature created man and gave him great privileges.

EPISTULAE MORALES

- 16.8 Nature's wants are slight; so follow Nature.
- 22.15 It is not Nature's fault that we are worse when we die than when we were born.
- 30.11 Nature wishes her laws to be ours.
- 41.8 Man's highest good is achieved by living to his own Nature (rational).
- 45.9 He is happy who conforms himself to the laws of Nature.
- 55.1 Nature gave us our legs and eyes.
- 66.1 Nature acted unfairly in giving Claranus such a poor body for such a gifted soul.
- 66.39 Reason is copying Nature.
- 78.7 Nature constructed us so that pain is endurable or is short.
- 90.16 Nature equipped us for whatever she enforced on us.
- 90.44 Nature does not give virtue; it is an art to be good.
- 93.2 It is fairer for us to obey Nature than it is when the Fates take off a young man in death.
- 93.8 We are Nature's creditors for having lived.

EPISTULAE MORALES

- 93.9 We know Nature's beginnings: how she orders the course of the heavens, changes, and brings to an end. She is the end of her own existence.
- 94.56 Nature produced us in health and freedom; she elevated our gaze to the skies, not to objects of greed.
- 98.14 When one strays from Nature, he is a slave to chance.
- 104.22 Nature has given us a brave spirit to combat all things.
- 107.8 Nature moderates the world by changing the seasons and the weather.
- 110.10 We bring forth gold and silver out of the earth contrary to Nature and thus get the material for our destruction.
- 116.3 Nature gave us an interest in our well-being.
- 117.23 Select any part of Nature as a means of death. These means are to be found in the elements.
- 117.32 Nature has not given us so much time that we can waste it.
- 119.3 Nature wants only her due, nothing more; bread can be coarse or fine, etc.
- 120.4 Nature gives us not knowledge, but seeds of knowledge.
- 122.5 All vices are a rebellion against Nature.
- 122.19 If we follow Nature, all is easy; if not, we row against the current.

## SECTION C

FORTUNEDE PROVIDENTIA

- 6.6 Scorn Fortune; it cannot harm you.

DE CONSTANTIA

- 5.4 Fortune takes only what she has given.
- 5.7 Property, etc. are things at Fortune's call.
- 8.3 Fortune always outmatched by virtue.
- 8.3 Man can bear injuries of men, if he can bear those of Fortune.
- 15.3 Fortune conquers us, unless we conquer her.
- 15.5 Fortune has no place in a poor(wise) man's house.

DE IRA

- 3.6.5 Fortune is not so submissive to anyone that she always responds.
- 3.25.4 Fortune cannot harm him who is serene in mind.

DE CLEMENTIA

- 1.1.2 Fortune proclaims gifts for human beings.  
2.6.3 The wise man will parry Fortune's strokes.

AD MARCIAM DE CONSOLATIONE

- 1.1 We cannot acquit Fortune of Marcia's complaint of taking away her possessions(children).  
5.6 An unruffled spirit conquers Fortune.  
10.3 Take what Fortune gives remembering it is insecure.  
15.1 Fortune outrages the Caesars at times, showing they have less control over themselves than over others.  
16.8 Fortune is merciful to Marcia even when it is angry.  
20.2 Fortune sometimes apportions goods unjustly, but death levels all things.  
26.6 Men are a small part of Fortune's domain.

DE VITA BEATA

- 4.5 Indifference to Fortune is the escape to freedom.  
15.3 Whoever follows virtue and pleasure begins to depend on Fortune.  
20.3 Seneca heeds not Fortune since he despises riches alike when he has them and when he lacks them.  
25.5 Seneca despises the whole domain of Fortune.

DE OTIO

- 5.7 Fortune wrecks naught of what Nature has appointed.

DE TRANQUILLITATE ANIMI

- 4.2 Let not man act as if there is no place where man can escape from Fortune.  
4.6 Fortune might remove one from high position.  
8.3 Those whom Fortune never regarded are more cheerful than those she has forsaken.  
8.9 Reduce your possessions so as to be less exposed to the injuries of Fortune.  
9.2 Seek riches within yourself, not from Fortune.  
10.3 All are chained to Fortune.  
10.6 Limit your advancement in material riches before Fortune can decide the end of this advancement.  
11.1 The wise man never retreats from Fortune because he has nothing to lose.  
13.2 A man of many affairs puts himself in Fortune's power.

DE BREVITATE VITAE

- 5.3 Nothing is above him who is above Fortune.  
9.1 By depending on the morrow and wasting today one attempts to dispose of what Fortune governs and not what he himself governs.



AD POLYBIUM DE CONSOLATIONE

- 9.4 Fortune is fickle and shifts its favors.  
 14.2 Fortune afflicts all with death.  
 16.5 Nothing is sacred to Fortune. She touches all with the hand of death.  
 18.3 Fortune provides many good things.

AD HELVIAM DE CONSOLATIONE

- 5.4 Seneca never trusted Fortune even when it offered peace: blessings, money, influence.  
 5.4 No one is crushed by Fortune who is not first deceived by her smiles.  
 17.5 Philosophy alone can save Helvia from the onslaught of Fortune.

DE BENEFICIIS

- 2.16.2 Fortune may give you cities, but do not be proud.  
 2.28.2 Fortune is very rarely judicious.  
 3.20.2 Fortune can buy and sell the body, but not man's mind.  
 5.2.2 Fortune modifies the issue of even the best plans.  
 5.4.2 Fortune places kings in their high positions.

EPISTULAE MORALES

- 4.7 No man is so far advanced by Fortune that he is not threatened as greatly as he has been aided.  
 15.9 It is noble to be contented and not dependent on Fortune.  
 18.6 When Fortune is kind, we must fortify ourselves against her violence.  
 18.7 Security does not depend on Fortune.  
 36.6 Fortune has no jurisdiction over character.  
 42.4 Fortune alone often keeps cruel and ambitious men from attempting the very worst deeds.  
 44.5 The soul alone render us noble and rises above Fortune.  
 59.18 What Fortune has not given(peace of mind), she can not take away.  
 63.7 Fortune takes away friends, but she also gives them.  
 71.30 The wise man overcomes Fortune by his virtues.  
 72.7 Fortune gives us nothing we can own.  
 74.6 Anyone who deems things other than virtue to be good puts himself in the power of Fortune.  
 74.19 There is no wall that Fortune cannot take by storm; so strengthen the inner defences of the soul.  
 81.31 He is the richest to whom Fortune gave nothing.  
 82.5 Fortune cannot hurt one protected by philosophy. She can only seize one who clings to her.  
 85.26 The brave man(wise man) fears not death, burning, imprisonment, and other missiles of Fortune. He just takes them as part of existence.

EPISTULAE MORALES

- 91.2 Fortune generally allows men when assailing them collectively to have a foreboding of the suffering to come.
- 91.4 What is there that Fortune does not drag down from prosperity, the more violently the more brilliant it happens to be.
- 92.2 Perfect reason alone can stand firm against Fortune.
- 98.2 Fortune gives us neither good nor evil, but only the raw material for these.
- 99.22 Fortune lets man go(to death) when she sees fit.
- 104.22 The only safe harbor is a readiness to receive Fortune's missiles, neither skulking nor turning back.
- 110.2 Are we under guardianship of the gods or consigned to Fortune?

## SECTION D

GODDE PROVIDENTIA

- 1.6 A tie of likeness exists between God and man. The only difference is one of time. Man is god's offspring; God tests a good man.
- 4.5 God favors those whom he gives a chance to do the courageous and the brave deeds.
- 4.7 God disciplines those whom he loves.
- 5.9 Whatever ordains us to live and die also binds the gods. Creator of the world made Fate, yet he follows its decrees.
- 6.6 Man outstrips God in that he is superior to evil. God is just exempt from it.

DE CONSTANTIA

- 8.2 The wise man is like the gods in all save immortality.

DE CLEMENTIA

- 1.1.4 If the immortal gods require a reckoning from me, I am ready.
- 1.7.2 Nero is to be just and merciful as the gods are.

DE IRA

- 2.16.3 Man alone comprehends God and imitates him.
- 2.26.2 The divine plan operates in the laws of Nature. The immortal gods neither wish to nor are able to hurt us.
- 2.30.2 You waste time in praying God for something.

AD MARCIAM DE CONSOLATIONE

- 12.4 Even divinities can perish in death. So stories tell.

AD MARCIAM DE CONSOLATIONE

- 19.5 Fortune cannot hold what Nature has let go.  
 25.1-3 The soul appears to be immortal. So God is immortal.  
 26.6 God destroys the earth in cycles.

AD POLYBIUM DE CONSOLATIONE

- 17.1 Former great men are enrolled as gods. Let us imitate them in adversity.

AD HELVIAM DE CONSOLATIONE

- 6.8 The planets whirl about by the inviolable law of Nature. God's nature finds delight in speedy motion.  
 8.3 What is the great creator? God? Reason, Spirit, or Fate?

DE OTIO

- 4.2 Did God create many systems? What is the nature of God? Does he encompass his works within or without?

DE BREVITATE VITAE

- 19.1 It is more important to know what shape and substance God has and what Nature has in store for the soul freed from the body than to be concerned with worldly things.

DE VITA BEATA

- 8.4 God is called the world.  
 16.1-2 You assume likeness to God in being virtuous.  
 20.5 The gods are the rulers of the world. They are the censors of deeds and words.

DE BENEFICIIS

- 1.1.9 The immortal gods are beneficent even to evil men.  
 2.29.2 We are below the gods. People say the gods neglect us when Nature does not let certain qualities exist in the same person.  
 2.29.4 Our Father has bestowed benefits and blessings on us.  
 2.30.1 We receive our existence from the gods.  
 3.6.2 The gods give judgment.  
 3.17.3 Fear the gods who witness all ingratitude.  
 3.28.2 The world is the parent of us all.  
 4.3.2 If giving is only to seek for a return, then the gods would not give anything.  
 4.5.1 The gods do hear our prayers and are generous.  
 4.6.1-5 God has been extravagant in forming the universe for us.  
 4.7.1-2 God and nature and divine reason are the same. God is the first of a chain of causes. Any name can stand for God if it connotes force.  
 4.8.1-3 Nature, Fate, Fortune, and God are the same. All powers will return into primal fire.

DE BENEFICIIS

- 4.18.3 God gives man reason and fellowship with himself.
- 4.23.4 The stars are called gods.
- 4.25.1-3 Good is done to us by the gods without their seeking for any advantage.
- 4.28.3 Certain gifts God bestows on all human beings.
- 4.31-32 Gods show indulgence to some because of their ancestry.
- 5.17.7 God thought me worthy of this set of benefits.
- 5.25.4 We ask for help from the gods by prayers; but they do not hear us.
- 6.22.1 The gods act under no external constraint. They are heavenly bodies.
- 6.23.6 Our interests are the concern of the gods. Nature created us. There was design in the creation of man. Men alone have intellects.
- 7.3.2 The immortal gods rule without arms from on high.
- 7.7.4 God suffers no harm because of his divine nature.
- 7.1.7 That person has perfect knowledge of the useful and essential who knows he has nothing to fear from God or man.

EPISTULAE MORALES

- 9.16 Juppiter returns within himself when Nature and the heavens are in the process of dissolution.
- 12.10 God bestows the number of days of life.
- 12.10 We should thank God for freedom to end life.
- 16.5-6 If God is the arbiter of the universe, obey him; if chance, endure it.
- 17.6 There is true liberty in studying philosophy. No longer will God or man be feared.
- 18.13 He alone is worthy of God who scorns riches.
- 31.8 Have a plan of life with a knowledge of things human and divine. This makes one an associate of the gods and not their suppliant.
- 31.10 No one has knowledge of God.
- 31.10 God is the highest and most powerful. The soul is a god dwelling within us.
- 41.1 God dwells within us. God is a spirit marking our good and evil deeds.
- 41.3 The beauty of nature indicates God's existence.
- 44.1 All men spring from the gods.
- 53.11 Study philosophy and you will differ from the gods only in that they live longer.
- 58.28 We are weak, so let us turn our minds to what is eternal, namely God, who protects and governs all.
- 65.12 The first cause is simple because matter is simple. The first cause is creative reason or God.
- 65.19 Seneca asks rhetorical questions as to whether he should inquire into the nature of the "artifex mundi."

EPISTULAE MORALES

- 65.23. God and matter exist. God controls matter.
- 71.13 All things are subject to change, although God controls them.
- 71.16 Great souls should comply with God's wishes and suffer what the law of the universe ordains.
- 73.6 A god controls the seasons.
- 73.13 A wise man is most happy, even as the gods.
- 74.14 Lust, banquets, etc. do not pertain to God.
- 74.16 Is anything good in which man surpasses God?
- 74.20 Let man be pleased at whatever pleases God.
- 75.17 Gods are not powers of evil since they are all-good and thus cannot harm anyone.
- 76.23 The good man has the highest sense of duty to the gods. Good men know that all happens by the divine law.
- 77.12 The divine decrees are unalterable.
- 82.1 A god will be Lucilius' sponsor. This god is a soul that loves right and goodness.
- 83.1 Nothing is hidden from the sight of god.
- 87.19 That produces a wise man which produces a god, i.e., a perfect reason and conformity to Nature.
- 90.29 Wisdom discloses what the temple of the gods is; it also tells what the gods are.
- 90.29 Wisdom takes us back to eternal Reason, the beginning of all things., and the force inhering in seeds of all things.
- 92.1 The divine Reason is in command of all things; our reason is the same because it is derived from the divine reason.
- 92.7 Human beings are second only to the gods.
- 92.27 Reason is perfect in the gods. In us it is "perfectible."
- 92.30 Man is from God and will return to participate in divinity. The universe is God and we are his members and associates.
- 93.3 None deal fairly with the gods. We rail at Fate, but is it not fairer that we obey Nature rather than it obey us?
- 95.36 The immortal gods were born with goodness as part of their nature.
- 95.48 Man never makes progress until he has the right idea of God. Believe God exists, is supreme, and punishes.
- 95.52 We are all parts of one body (includes god and man). Nature created us from the same source and for the same end.
- 96.2 Seneca not only obeys God, but agrees with him.
- 107.9 Do not carp at Nature for what happens, but accompany the god under whose guidance all progresses.
- 110.1 Are we consigned to guardians or left to Fortune?

EPISTULAE MORALES

- 110.10 God, our Father, has given us all things for our own good.
- 113.16 God the creator gives infinite variety.
- 117.6 All infer the gods exist because everyone has an idea of the deity.
- 117.24 If you wish to live, pray to the gods for health. If you wish to die, ignore the gods and end your life.
- 119.15 The builder of the universe provided that we should live in well being, but not in luxury.
- 120.14 A virtuous man has developed his soul's capabilities until he is inferior only to God from whom a part flows into man.
- 124.14 There are four natures: tree, animal, man, God. Man and God are of the same nature. God is immortal, but not so man.
- 124.14 That is perfect which is according to nature as a whole. Nature has reason.
- 124.23 Man is on a level with God when he possesses perfect reason.

## SECTION E

SENECA CALLS HIMSELF A STOIC

- De Otio 1.4  
 De Otio 2.1  
 De Otio 6.4  
 De Otio 8.1  
 De Ira 2.19.3  
 De Beneficiis 2.31.1  
 De Beneficiis 2.35.2  
 De Beneficiis 4.2.1  
 De Beneficiis 4.8.1  
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 Epistulae Morales 124.2

APPROVAL SHEET

The thesis submitted by Robert J. Koehn, S.J., has been read and approved by three members of the Department of Classical Languages.

The final copies have been examined by the director of the thesis and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated, and that the thesis is now given final approval with reference to content, form, and mechanical accuracy.

The thesis is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts.

September 18, 1947  
Date

James J. Mealy, S.J.  
Signature of Adviser