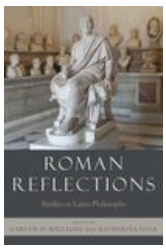

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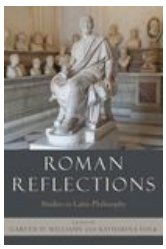

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CHAPTER

7 Precept(or) and Example in Seneca

Matthew Roller

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Abstract

This chapter argues that, while Seneca frequently deploys everyday Roman exemplary discourse in a fairly traditional way, in Letters 94 and 108 he subjects this discourse to a searching critique, identifying, from a Stoic viewpoint, a series of deficiencies in its capacity to register and assign moral value. A given glorious deed may have been motivated by a vice, not a virtue; a virtuous condition of soul can be inferred only on the basis of multiple observations over time. Focusing as it does on the individual deed in the singular moment, for Seneca Roman exemplary discourse cannot ordinarily meet this standard of multiple and layered observation; and yet, for all its faults, Seneca hardly abandons this discourse, but proposes revisions to its functioning in order to accommodate it better to Stoic ethics.

Keywords: Roman exemplary discourse, Seneca, praecepta/decreta, analogy, exempla and praeceptor

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This chapter investigates how Seneca's Stoic philosophy appropriates one characteristic feature of everyday Roman ethics, the discourse of exemplarity. It is well known that Seneca, in his ethical prose works, regularly engages the beliefs of everyday moral agents and the modes of moral valuation that they employ, in the very project of seeking, eventually, to oust those beliefs and modes of valuation and to replace them with Stoic alternatives. The fact that Seneca is firmly embedded in Roman aristocratic culture under the later Julio-Claudian emperors, and that he philosophizes in Latin, entails that the everyday moral agents whose beliefs and modes of valuation he scrutinizes are, for the most part, contemporary Roman aristocrats —his own peers and readers. Thus, however Greek his models for doing Stoic philosophy may be, it is the beliefs, values, and practices of his own culture that are chief objects of his philosophical scrutiny.

A particular cultural practice that attracts Seneca's philosophical attention in some of the later *Epistulae morales* is the (characteristically Roman) use of historical *exempla* in the service of moral argumentation. Throughout his philosophical prose works, Seneca deploys everyday Roman exemplary discourse in a fairly

traditional way, to provide touchstones of moral value and models for action in the present. In two letters, however, he subjects this discourse to a searching critique: he identifies, from a Stoic point of view, a series of inadequacies and deficiencies in its capacity to identify and assign moral value. Yet, for all its faults, he does not abandon this discourse altogether. Rather, he proposes revisions to the way the discourse works in order to put it on a more secure footing within Stoic ethics. The figure of the *praeceptor*, along with the precepts this figure delivers, are key to Seneca's proposed renovation, and thus central to his Stoic reframing of the moral dynamics of exemplarity.

7.1. Everyday Exemplary Discourse

p. 130

Let me begin by sketching the characteristic features of exemplary discourse as it generally operates within texts and monuments of the late Republic and early Empire. This socially widespread and chronologically persistent discourse is among the most important channels by which Romans encountered their past, and it sets the past into various rhetorical, historiographical, and moral frames.[1] Here I focus on the moral dimension, as this is what most concerns Seneca. The discourse proceeds in a sequence of four notionally sequential stages, as follows:

First stage. Someone performs an action in the public eye—that is, under the gaze of an audience representing a community of which performer and spectators are a part. This community is sharply focused on sustaining itself, and its values are correspondingly oriented toward service to the community in all relevant arenas (above all, battlefield and Forum) and on the maintenance of its internal social relations. Performer and audience, as members of this community, share these values and orientations.[2]

Second stage. Upon witnessing the action, this "primary" audience evaluates its consequence for the community, judging it "good" or "bad" in terms of one or more of these shared values and orientations—for example, "This deed was done valorously; that one was done ungratefully." By witnessing and judging, the primary audience articulates the action's relationship to the common good and imbues it with social and moral significance, thereby converting it into a "deed," a *res gesta*, that has implicitly or explicitly normative force.

Third stage. This deed, its performer, and the moral judgment(s) passed upon it are commemorated via one or more monuments, and thus made available to "secondary" audiences that may be distant in space or time. A monument is any sign capable of summoning the deed and its ascribed value to conscious recollection: an honorific statue or name, a building, a toponym, a wound or other bodily marking, a narrative, a ritual, a theatrical performance, and the like.

Fourth stage. Secondary audiences at a spatial or temporal remove, who learn of the deed and its ascribed value by encountering a monument, are enjoined via the monument to accept the deed as normative: either
p. 131 as a model for themselves to imitate or avoid, or as a moral standard by which they may ↳ judge other performances they witness. And with the prospect of imitation and further judging, we return to stages 1 and 2, and the cycle starts over.

Everyday exemplary discourse may seem to promise a seamless, perpetual loop of social reproduction, with actions instantiating values that shape new actions in turn. Yet matters are never so simple. For example, secondary audiences are by no means passive and uncritical recipients of the judgment(s) they find sedimented in the monuments they encounter. They may disagree with the primary audience's judgment—assigning the action to a different moral category, deeming it badly rather than well done, and so on. They may disagree among themselves about what action a monument commemorates and what value it ascribes, or whether a particular object is a monument at all. They may also create new monuments to a deed, even at a distance of space and time—modifying the received tale to bring out a particular aspect, creating a new

element from whole cloth, restoring or altering a built monument, and the like. Debate and contestation are thus not only endemic to exemplary discourse, but provide its lifeblood: for it is in and through disputation about the meanings of the past that Romans debate the moral questions they find pressing in the present.

Throughout his moral prose works, Seneca vigorously engages in everyday exemplary discourse. As a secondary observer removed in time and space from the exemplary actors he describes, he renarrates their deeds (thus creating new narrative monuments) and reinterprets their existing monuments, and so imposes modified moral evaluations upon these figures. In the two letters discussed in sections 7.2 and 7.3, however, Seneca offers an explicitly Stoic critique of certain basic principles and assumptions of this discourse. He is particularly concerned with the dynamics of witnessing and judging—the moments at which the judging audiences, primary or secondary, ascribe moral value to an actor and action they have observed or learned of through a monument. In these letters he shows how everyday exemplary discourse falls short of Stoic standards in its practices of witnessing and judging; he then proposes ways of revising these practices, so as to create a modified, specifically Stoic form of exemplary discourse.[3]

7.2. The "Misjudgment" Critique

To understand Seneca's critique of moral evaluation in everyday exemplary discourse, we start by examining the first of the two letters in which he develops this critique at length, namely *Ep.* 94. This letter
p. 132 presents itself ↳ as defending the philosophical relevance and effectiveness of *praecepta*, as opposed to *decreta*, in Stoic philosophy (while *Ep.* 95, which is similar in length, structure, and conception, in turn defends *decreta*).[4] *Decreta* are general principles of universal application. They are sometimes presented as laws, or as being binding or on the side of "truth," "proof," "reason," and "knowledge"; rhetorically they may, though do not necessarily, take the form of descriptions or simple assertions.[5] *Praecepta*, conversely, operate at a level of greater specificity, recommending particular courses of action for people in particular circumstances or roles. The examples of *praecepta* that Seneca provides in *Ep.* 94 include prescribing how a husband should act toward his wife, a father toward his children, and a master toward his slaves (94.1, 3), as well injunctive statements such as "Eat thus, walk thus; this behavior suits a man, a woman, a husband, a bachelor" (94.8). Precepts are rhetorically hortatory, and they usually, if not always, employ deontic language and syntax: imperatives, futures with imperative force, the passive periphrastic conjugation, verbs like *debeo*. Morally, they help their addressee to identify and discharge a proper function (*kathekon*/*officium*) in a given situation.[6] One key aspect of preception, as Seneca presents it, is (*ad)monitio*, "reminding" or "warning": thus, when discussing a *praeceptum*, he sometimes uses the word (*ad)monitio* instead (and likewise with reference to the agent and action: Seneca sometimes uses *monitor* and (*ad)moneo* instead of *praeceptor* and *praecipio*, so as to emphasize this key aspect). This semantic and syntactic nexus underscores that precepts *exhort* their addressee toward particular actions, and—at least sometimes—*remind* them of their duty.[7]

From these associations we may conjecture that the audience for precepts is, in Stoic terms, either beginners or "progressors," that is, those who have advanced beyond the beginning in their moral
p. 133 knowledge, but are far from ↳ being sages. Beginners and progressors require instruction about what action is appropriate to their current situation.[8] Seneca says as much in *Ep.* 94, when describing how precepts are dispensed and received: he writes, "The way for doing actions must be shown to the person who is imperfect/incomplete but making progress (*imperfecto sed proficienti*) … for those with weaker minds, it is necessary for someone to go in front and say, 'you'll avoid this, you'll do that.' "[9] The latter instructions are *praecepta*, as their deontic language and their relevance to the recipient's immediate situation make clear.

Seneca goes on to spotlight one particular aspect of this *praeceptor*'s advice-giving: he says that we need an advocate (*aduocatus*, in the etymological sense of "one summoned to provide aid") to "offer precepts against the precepts of the crowd." Shortly thereafter Seneca calls this person a "guard" (*custos*), explaining that his job is to repel hearsay and contradict what the crowd praises; and that, thanks to this guard's frequent warnings (*monitiones*), the groundless opinions that echo around us are driven off.[10] Seneca's addressee, here (as often) in the first-person plural, seems to encompass the *Letters*' broader readership along with the nominal addressee Lucilius; thus, "we" are all interpellated as beginners or progressors who require someone more advanced to show the way, lest we go astray. Having so positioned us, Seneca goes on to explain how "the crowd," or people in general, produce and disseminate erroneous evaluations and thereby inculcate vice in those not strong or philosophically advanced enough to resist (53–5). That "the crowd's" opinions are vicious is an orthodox Stoic position, which Seneca typically affirms in relation to the valuing of riches, beauty, the pleasures of wine and sex, the prestige of holding office, and the like.[11] These things are "indifferents" from a Stoic perspective—regarded as neither morally "good" nor "bad" in and of themselves, but as conferring morally insignificant types of advantage or disadvantage designated as
p. 134 "preferred" or "dispreferred." In ↳ 59 Seneca reiterates these points about the crowd's opinions, saying that it is necessary (sc. for the beginner or progressor) to be advised (*admoneri*), to have an "advocate" (*aduocatus*) of good mind and, amid the din of falsehoods, to hear only that person's voice, whispering wholesome words to you in the uproar of *ambitio*.[12] By specifically naming *ambitio*—the desire to gain prominence in affairs of state—as the false value against which the *aduocatus* should whisper, Seneca picks out office holding in particular from among the array of things that the many incorrectly value, and spotlights it for the discussion to come.

It is here, with *ambitio*, that everyday exemplarity enters this discussion. For the roster of traditional exemplary figures is largely filled by those who gained prominence in affairs of state. The "crowd" or *populus*, meanwhile, is nothing other than the Roman community at large, the authoritative moral judging body in everyday exemplary discourse. It is this group's "false" valuing of *ambitio* (among other things) that the Stoic *praeceptor* is to caution the beginner/progressor against. Starting in 60, Seneca overtly takes on the praeceptorial voice and provides precisely this advice.[13] First he exhorts his charge—Lucilius, or "you," the putative moral progressor—not to envy those whom the *populus* calls great and happy (*magni felicesque*), nor to allow a person wearing purple and accompanied by lictors (symbols of political office and power) to cause you to despise your own equanimity (60). These seem to be the "precepts against the precepts of the crowd," mentioned above: for the *praeceptor* is urging his charge not to follow the (alleged) majority view in considering political office and its trappings as goods to be praised and emulated.

The *praeceptor* then shifts to a discussion of military commanders (61). The flow of thought from office holding to military achievement is natural for a Roman, since commanding armies is a traditional responsibility of those who hold high office, and success as a commander is traditionally a source of great prestige for magistrates. Yet military glory, like office holding, is morally indifferent from a Stoic perspective, and the *praeceptor* duly rejects it as something to be deemed a moral "good." He declares that many people can lay siege to and capture cities, command armies and navies, and defeat the enemy, yet these same people cannot overcome vice: indeed, in a paradoxical reversal of active and passive, they suffer
p. 135 from their own covetousness, ↳ ambition, and cruelty precisely the same bad consequences that they inflict upon their enemies.[14]

After issuing these precepts, the *praeceptor* turns to *exempla*. By appending these *exempla* directly to general praeceptorial assertions about the suffering that military victors impose upon themselves and others, and the vices with which they are ridden, Seneca invites his reader to suppose that these *exempla* will illustrate these general assertions.[15] He starts with Alexander the Great (62–3):[16]

> agebat infelicem Alexandrum furor aliena uastandi et ad ignota mittebat … quod cuique optimum est eripit, Lacedaemona seruire iubet, Athenas tacere … toto orbe arma circumfert, nec subsistit usquam lassa crudelitas inmanium ferarum modo quae plus quam exigit fames mordent. iam in unum regnum multa regna coniecit, iam Graeci Persaeque eundem timent … it tamen ultra oceanum solemque, indignatur ab Herculis Liberique uestigiis uictoriam flectere, ipsi naturae uim parat. non ille ire uult, sed non potest stare.
>
> A mad passion for devastating other people's land drove unfortunate Alexander, and hurled him into the unknown … he took away from each people what was best about them: he bid Sparta to serve, and Athens to be silent … he spreads his weapons all over the world. In the manner of huge beasts that bite off more than their hunger requires, his cruelty never stops in exhaustion. Already he has put many kingdoms together into one, already the Greeks and Persians fear the same person … still he proceeds beyond Ocean and the sun, disdains to turn his victory aside from the path of Hercules and Liber, and he readies violence against nature itself. Assuredly he doesn't want to go, but he cannot stand still.

Alexander neatly exemplifies all the *praeceptor* said via precepts in the previous two sections. The *praeceptor*
p. 136 had advised us not to envy those whom the ↳ crowd calls *magni felicesque*: Alexander is *magnus* by definition; and here he is also preemptively declared *infelix*, lest anyone think the opposite, because the vice *furor* drove him on (*agebat*). Thus he is unmistakably identified as one of the not-to-be-admired figures whom the *praeceptor* has previously described in general. Alexander was of course renowned for his successes as a military commander, duly enumerated here, and to a lesser extent for his statesmanship, perhaps indicated by the clause "he put many kingdoms together into one." Thus he falls into the category of people mentioned in the precepts who wield political power and win military victories. Yet the *praeceptor* insists that vices, not virtues, underpin these achievements. Cruelty like that of giant beasts motivated Alexander's insatiable desire for conquest, which led him to transgress the bounds of nature. The *praeceptor* also points to a kind of perversity—making slaves of Spartans; silencing the Athenians; causing Greeks and Persians to fear the same person, thus making allies out of these stereotypical enemies—which does not appear closely connected to the specific vices named. Concluding the *exemplum,* the *praeceptor* declares that Alexander himself did not wish to go so far, but could not stand (*non potest stare*, sc. against his vicious impulses)—driving home the point that his vices inflicted upon him what he inflicted upon others, who likewise could not stand against him. Thus Alexander also instantiates the vicious impulses and the active/passive reversal of which the preceding precepts spoke.[17]

As a second *exemplum* the *praeceptor* offers Pompey, the other canonical *Magnus*, and gives him similar treatment (64–5):

> ne Gnaeo quidem Pompeio externa bella ac domestica uirtus aut ratio suadebat, sed insanus amor magnitudinis falsae. modo in Hispaniam et Sertoriana arma, modo ad colligandos piratas ac maria pacanda uadebat: hae praetexebantur causae ad continuandam potentiam. quid illum in Africam, quid in septentrionem, quid in Mithridaten et Armeniam et omnis Asiae angulos traxit? infinita scilicet cupido crescendi, cum sibi uni parum magnus uideretur.
>
> Nor was it *uirtus* or reason that urged wars foreign and civil upon Gnaeus Pompeius, but an insane love for false greatness. At one moment he was rushing off to Spain and Sertorius's weapons, at another to restraining the pirates and pacifying the seas: these reasons furnished pretexts for holding power without interruption. What drew him to Africa, or to the north, or against Mithridates and Armenia and all corners of Asia? Evidently an unbounded lust for growing larger, when only to himself did he seem insufficiently *magnus.*

p. 137 With a series of plays on the cognomen *magnus*, the *praeceptor* presents Pompey's military and perhaps political career[18] as unified by a vicious lust for size and for "growing bigger." His monumental cognomen is thus revalued pejoratively as indicating the scale of his vices, rather than honorifically indicating the scale of his military achievements, as the dynamics of everyday exemplary discourse might lead "the crowd" to imagine.[19] For the *praeceptor* insists that it was vices, not any admirable quality like *uirtus* or *ratio*, that launched Pompey on his wars external and civil, and that drove him to conquer in every direction on land and sea. Indeed, the word *uirtus* here has a double-voiced quality that underscores the *praeceptor*'s message. For in its juxtaposition with *bella* (just preceding), *uirtus* seems to carry its traditional military sense of "valor in combat," and focalizes "the crowd's" view of Pompey as an admirable and successful commander who displayed this traditional virtue. But in its juxtaposition with *ratio* (just following), *uirtus* takes on a philosophical flavor, in particular its Stoic meaning of "consistency of character."[20] It is this specifically Stoic sort of *uirtus* that the *praeceptor* denies to Pompey, and the lack of which makes it possible to say that Pompey was carried headlong by vices. By this crypto-redefinition of *uirtus*, the *praeceptor* deftly depreciates "the crowd's" judgment and strips Pompey of his central claim to social value—his success as a commander—in one stroke. In the sentences that follow, the *praeceptor* duly mentions some of Pompey's famous military achievements, ascribing to each a vicious motivation. Pompey too, then, instantiates the precepts given in 60–1 denying the validity of the crowd's judgment and asserting that successful magistrates and commanders are driven by vices, not virtues.

The *praeceptor* then adduces Caesar and Marius as two final *exempla* of the viciousness of famous commanders (66), polemically attributing their political and military successes to *ambitio* and *gloria* (in a negative sense) rather than to *uirtus.* To wrap up (67), he reiterates that the active/passive dynamic mentioned among the precepts (61) applies to all four of these *exempla:* as these generals shake up everything, so they are shaken up themselves (*concuterent—concutiebantur*); like tornadoes they whirl up everything but are first whirled themselves (*conuoluunt—uoluuntur*); their force is so great because they cannot control themselves; the evil they do to others redounds upon themselves. And as a parting shot at the
p. 138 alleged judgments of the crowd, the *praeceptor* bids his addressee not to suppose that anyone can be made ↳ "happy" by someone else's unhappiness (*non est quod credas quemquam fieri aliena infelicitate felicem*, 67).

What exactly is the *praeceptor* doing to and with these examples? He—or Seneca, to the extent that these voices are distinguishable[21]—reflects overtly on this question in the following section. This reflection is itself couched in deontic language, and so takes the form of a string of precepts directed to "us" as readers no less than to the addressee Lucilius (68):

> omnia ista exempla quae oculis atque auribus nostris ingeruntur retexenda sunt, et plenum malis sermonibus pectus exhauriendum; inducenda in occupatum locum uirtus, quae mendacia et contra uerum placentia exstirpet, quae nos a populo cui nimis credimus separet ac sinceris opinionibus reddat.
>
> All such exempla that are forced into our eyes and ears must be unwoven, and our breast which is full of evil speech must be emptied. *Virtus* must be brought into that (previously) occupied space, to root out falsehoods and accepted opinions that are contrary to the truth, and to separate us from the *populus* in which we trust too much and restore us to unblemished opinions.

The "evil speech" and "falsehoods and opinions contrary to truth," which the *praeceptor*/Seneca says derive from *exempla* of the sort just narrated, evidently issue from, and are forced into our eyes and ears by, the *populus*. Hence we must empty our breasts of such speech, separate ourselves from the *populus*, and "unweave" or "unjoin" (*retexere*) the *exempla.* This slightly puzzling expression seems to mean, specifically, to break the link whereby positive moral value is inferred or ascribed on the basis of political and military success.[22] This inference, allegedly embraced by the *populus*, is indeed characteristic of

everyday exemplary discourse (second stage). By demonstrating in the cases of Alexander and others that vices may or do underpin such success, the *praeceptor* tries to break this characteristic link (hence *exempla*
p. 139 *retexere*). ↳ The *uirtus* and the "unblemished opinions" (*sincerae opiniones*) that will be introduced in their stead will turn out to have Stoic coloring, as we shall see.[23] With this deconstruction of "everyday" exemplary readings of four famous generals, then, Seneca is illustrating a *process* of revaluation—a severing of the traditional link between observed action and ascribed value that characterizes everyday exemplary discourse, and the forging of new links that are sounder from a Stoic point of view.

Seneca's exposition in *Ep.* 94 has so far implied that "we," the readers/addressees positioned as beginners or progressors, are observers and judges of the exemplary performances of others. To end this letter, however, Seneca imagines "us" as performers in our own right who are subject to observation and judgment in turn. For Seneca suggests (69) that "we" should withdraw from the city to the countryside, to avoid the people he styles *hortatores insaniae*, "encouragers of madness." To be amid the crowd, with its incorrect values, encourages our vices: when other people wrongly ascribe positive moral value to "indifferents" like purple clothing and gold tableware, we will pursue such things ourselves as we seek these people's approval. Yet nobody, he declares, engages in such display in the absence of witnesses (i.e., without a judging audience); hence withdrawal from the city and its "crowd" removes our stimulus to vice.[24]

This depiction of the moral dynamics of external evaluation turns everyday exemplary discourse precisely on its head. For the premise of everyday exemplary discourse is that the community's evaluative gaze attracts social actors who strive to perform a great deed, in order to gain praise and renown within the
p. 140 community. In Senecan terms, "we" too, as social actors, are ↳ enticed to pursue what "the crowd" (i.e., the community at large) values as we seek its approval. But since the community, according to Seneca, incorrectly evaluates the actions it observes because it misunderstands the nature and location of moral value, then anyone subject to its evaluative gaze and seeking its approval will be inspired to perform vicious deeds, not virtuous ones. Hence the moral imperative to withdraw from that vice-inculcating gaze.[25]

But this is still not the end. If one cannot withdraw from the city and the gaze of the many, then one should keep a *monitor* close at hand, to contradict and correct the false valuations that din around one.[26] As noted above, "advising" or "reminding" is a central aspect of the overall preceptorial function. The *monitor* thus appears to be none other than the *praeceptor* with his "advising" aspect picked out in this particular social context. This *monitor* will not only help us to judge correctly the actions we observe, but will also, implicitly, serve as an authoritative judge to our own performances: we will not try to please the crowd, knowing that so doing will incur our *monitor*'s disapproval. Hence the authority of the community's judgment in everyday exemplary discourse is depreciated relative to the authority of just one (properly trained) person's judgment.

7.3. The "Insufficient Evidence" Critique

Seneca provides a second extensive discussion of the relationship between exemplarity and Stoic ethics in *Ep.* 120. Here he sets out to answer the question, allegedly posed by Lucilius, of how we have acquired the concept of "the good" (*bonum*) and "the honorable" (*honestum*).[27] Lucilius speaks as one who recognizes that he has already acquired this knowledge, but is puzzled as to how. Seneca's exposition of the process of acquisition, consequently, is cast entirely in the past tense, describing processes that unfold over time but entirely prior to the current moment. Very broadly, Seneca argues that we came to a proper knowledge of
p. 141 these concepts through a two-stage process. ↳ In the first stage, we gained a rough sense of the concepts by observing or otherwise learning about the actions of others, and by judging those actions. This stage, as Seneca describes it, is virtually identical with everyday exemplary discourse as described above, with a strong focus on the dynamics of witnessing, judging, and norm-setting and norm-following. The second stage of concept formation involves some revision of the impressions gained in the first stage; thus it goes beyond everyday exemplary discourse, and entails a new critique of that discourse, as we shall see.

Seneca begins by offering definitions of *bonum* and *honestum* (2–3), which make clear that he is using these words in their Stoic senses: he defines *bonum* by adducing a "utility" criterion, and defines *honestum* as that for which an account can be given as to why it is the right thing to do. Both definitions are in the mainstream of Stoic understanding.[28] He then turns to concept formation, his main topic (3–4):

> nunc ergo ad id reuertor de quo desideras dici, quomodo ad nos prima boni honestique notitia peruenerit … nobis uidetur obseruatio collegisse et rerum saepe factarum inter se conlatio; per analogian nostri intellectum et honestum et bonum iudicant.
>
> Now, therefore, I return to the matter about which you desire discussion, how the initial concept of the good and honorable reached us … We [sc. Stoics] believe that the observation and comparison among themselves of deeds frequently done has produced [sc. this concept]; our school judges that the honorable and good have been comprehended through analogy.

Thus Seneca claims that the Stoic position, with which he affiliates himself and concurs (*nobis, nostri*), is that we grasp the good and the honorable by "analogizing" from our observation and comparison of deeds done. He describes the analogical process as follows (4–5):

> quae sit haec analogia dicam. noueramus corporis sanitatem: ex hac cogitauimus esse aliquam et animi. noueramus uires corporis: ex his collegimus esse et animi robur. aliqua benigna facta, aliqua humana, aliqua fortia nos obstupefecerant: haec coepimus tamquam perfecta mirari. suberant illis multa uitia quae species conspicui alicuius facti fulgorque celabat: haec dissimulauimus. natura iubet augere laudanda, nemo non gloriam ultra uerum tulit. ex his ergo speciem ingentis boni traximus.
>
> I will explain what this "analogy" is. We had experience of bodily health: from this we inferred that
> p. 142 there is also a kind of health of the mind. ↳ We had experience of bodily strength: from this we gathered that there is also strength of the mind. Certain benevolent deeds, certain humane ones, certain brave ones left us awestruck: these we began to admire as though they were complete/perfect. Underneath those deeds were many vices, which the appearance and splendor of any particular noteworthy deed concealed: to these we turned a blind eye. Nature bids us to magnify what is praiseworthy; there is no one who has not praised glory beyond what is true. From these things, then, we took in the outward appearance of a great good.

This exposition reveals two dimensions to the process of "analogizing." The first is that we extrapolated the character of what was abstract or invisible from what was concrete and visible: qualities of mind from

qualities of body; moral qualities of the actor from the splendid appearance of the deeds he performs. The second is that we generalized from particular observations to draw conclusions about the whole: we observed certain deeds that manifested particular virtues (*aliqua benigna, humana, fortia*), were duly impressed, and admired them "as though they were perfect/complete," *tamquam perfecta. Perfecta* seems to focalize a Stoic viewpoint, meaning "containing all the virtues," not just the observed ones,[29] while *tamquam* underscores the analogical character of this reasoning: we do not observe any actions that manifest all the virtues, but we infer what such actions look like by (it seems) mentally combining the characteristics of the various observed actions that manifest particular virtues.

On Seneca's telling, then, the process by which we acquire the concepts *bonum* and *honestum* begins with everyday exemplary discourse—categorizing actions we observe as instances of particular virtues or vices—supplemented by the additional step of imagining a "perfect" action embodying all the virtues. Seneca's use of the first-person plural in this exposition suggests that "we"—his addressees (i.e., Lucilius and/or readers) and himself—were ourselves analogizers, who gained our first inklings of the good and honorable via everyday exemplary discourse with this analogical supplement. Yet, as we shall see, Seneca is describing only the first stage of a biographical development, which will be succeeded by a second, more sophisticated stage of moral reasoning.[30] As the writer of this letter, he speaks from the vantage point of that higher level of sophistication, and implies that "we" are there with him—though without ever suggesting that "we," or he, is a *sapiens*.

The process of analogizing, as described here, also involves idealization. For Seneca goes on to explain that,
p. 143 notwithstanding the virtuous qualities ↳ (*benigna, humana, fortia*) of the particular deeds observed, many vices lay beneath, concealed by the splendid external appearance (*species fulgorque*) of any particular highly visible deed (*conspicui alicuius facti*). This statement may mean that achievements such as most people admire may be motivated by vices rather than virtues. This situation, discussed in *Ep.* 94, would already be familiar to the reader who is taking the letters in order. Here in *Ep.* 120, as we shall see, Seneca will explore this idea more briefly and then take the observation in a different direction.

We may expect Seneca to assert that the analogizer is oblivious to these hidden vices, and that they are recognized only at a more advanced stage of moral reasoning. But he does not say this: rather, he says that the analogizer is entirely cognizant of these vices, but *chooses* to disregard them and focus on the showy external appearance (*species, fulgor*), because nature causes us to stress the positive and magnify it over the negative. Thus, conscious idealization is an essential part of the analogical process that yields that first impression of the good (*speciem . . . boni*). The word *species*, like *tamquam* earlier, stresses the analogical dimension of the reasoning, specifically the gap between the concrete knowledge we have (consisting of individual actions that appear virtuous, but under which we know vices lie), and the idealized vision of "the good" as such that we infer from this evidence.

Seneca now adduces two historical *exempla:* Fabricius and Horatius Cocles, who are among the hoariest and most traditional figures in the canon of Roman Republican heroes.[31] By appending these *exempla* directly to a general, theoretical discussion of the process of analogizing, Seneca invites his reader to suppose that these *exempla* will illustrate that process.[32] His treatment of these *exempla* is central to my argument, so I quote them in full (6–8):

> Fabricius Pyrrhi regis aurum reppulit maiusque regno iudicauit regias opes posse contemnere. idem medico Pyrrhi promittente uenenum se regi daturum monuit Pyrrhum caueret insidias. eiusdem animi fuit auro non uinci, ueneno non uincere. admirati sumus ingentem uirum quem non regis, non contra regem promissa flexissent, boni exempli tenacem, quod difficillimum est, in bello innocentem, qui aliquod esse crederet etiam in hostes nefas, qui in summa paupertate quam sibi decus fecerat non aliter refugit diuitias quam uenenum. "uiue" inquit "beneficio meo, Pyrrhe,
> p. 144 et gaude quod adhuc dolebas, Fabricium non posse corrumpi." Horatius Cocles solus ↳ impleuit

> pontis angustias adimique a tergo sibi reditum, dummodo iter hosti auferretur, iussit et tam diu prementibus restitit donec reuulsa ingenti ruina tigna sonuerunt. postquam respexit et extra periculum esse patriam periculo suo sensit, "ueniat, si quis uult" inquit "*sic* euntem sequi" iecitque se in praeceps et non minus sollicitus in illo rapido alveo fluminis ut armatus quam ut saluus exiret, retento armorum uictricium decore tam tutus redit quam si ponte uenisset. haec et eiusmodi facta imaginem nobis ostendere uirtutis.
>
> Fabricius rejected King Pyrrhus's gold, judging it greater than royal power to be able to despise royal wealth. Also, when Pyrrhus's physician promised he would give the king poison, Fabricius warned Pyrrhus to beware of treachery. It was indicative of the same character not to be defeated by gold, and not to be victorious by poison. We marveled at this great man, who was swayed neither by promises of the king nor promises against the king, holding on firmly to good precedent, doing no wrong in war (which is very difficult), who believed there were things one mustn't do even to an enemy, who in extreme poverty—which he had made into an ornament for himself—recoiled from wealth no less than from poison. "Live, Pyrrhus, by my gift," he said, "and rejoice in what you have up to now been deploring, that Fabricius cannot be bought." Horatius Cocles occupied the narrows of the bridge by himself, and ordered that his way back be removed from behind, provided only that the enemy was deprived of passage. He long resisted those pressing him, until the beams, wrenched apart, collapsed with a huge crash. After looking back and perceiving that, through his own danger, his fatherland was out of danger, he said, "If anyone wishes to follow me going *this* way, let him come," and hurled himself headlong. In that swift channel of the river he was no less concerned to come out with his arms than to come out alive; retaining the ornament of his victorious weapons, he returned as safely as if he come by way of the bridge. These and similar deeds have shown us the likeness of *uirtus*.

Seneca's narrative of these exemplary deeds puts all the elements and dynamics of everyday exemplary discourse on display. In each case an actor's public performance is judged to display a moral virtue: *innocentia* and incorruptibility during wartime in Fabricius's case, and military valor in Horatius's. Judging audiences are implicitly or explicitly adduced in each case. "We" are, or were, spectators and judges of Fabricius's deed (*admirati sumus*)—"we" presumably still being, as before, analogizers or beginning moral reasoners. The "we" who marvel may be a primary or a secondary audience to Fabricius's deed: at this point
p. 145 what matters is that this audience observes and judges positively (perhaps overly so, as we shall see).[33] ↳ Even Pyrrhus, addressed directly in Fabricius's self-exemplifying quotation, is thereby marshaled as a witness to Fabricius's performance, and invited to approve it (*gaude . . .*). Horatius too has spectators to his deed: not only "us" readers who encounter his performance through this text, but also the enemy whom he invites to pursue him into the river, should they care to imitate his leap—"imitate me" being a conspicuously self-exemplifying utterance. And finally, both actors are expressly granted monuments to their valorous deeds and admirable virtues. Each receives a narrative, as related here by Seneca. Seneca also grants each a concrete, honorific token, a *decus*, to commemorate his deed. For Fabricius the *decus* is his poverty (*in summa paupertate quam sibi decus fecerat*), while for Horatius it is the weapons and armor that he did not lose either in his defensive fight on the bridge or during his leap and swim in the river (*retento armorum uictricium decore*). Thus these narratives show judging audiences being present and active, virtues being ascribed, monuments being created, and imitation being invited (in Horatius's case)—the key features of everyday exemplary discourse as described above.

The fruit of this discourse, Seneca concludes, is that "these and similar deeds showed us a likeness of virtue" (*haec et eiusmodi facta imaginem nobis ostendere uirtutis*, 8). This statement seems to confirm that these *exempla* do indeed illustrate the process of analogizing described more abstractly in 120.5. There, we were said to have inferred a notion ("outward appearance," *species*) of the good as such from our concrete experience of particular goods; here, we are shown a "likeness" (*imago*) of *uirtus* as such by the two specific

examples "and others of the same sort." Yet the words *species* and *imago* also seem to underscore that these are *only* impressions, derived from our analogizing activity and attributable to our lack of direct access to the concepts of *bonum, honestum*, or *uirtus* as such.

Moreover, Seneca continues to distance "us," here and now, from our past selves who reacted as we did to these two *exempla*. Not only does he continue to use the past tense (*admirati sumus, ostendere*) to describe our engagement with these *exempla,* but he shows that Fabricius and Horatius here have different exemplary functions for the earlier, analogizing "us" and for the later "us"(/Seneca) from whose perspective this letter is being written. The analogizer regards these *exempla* as normative and injunctive, in accordance with the fourth stage of everyday exemplary discourse: they model actions for us to imitate or avoid, or provide a moral standard by which we may judge the actions of others. Yet in the context of his explanation of concept formation, which is the topic of this letter, Seneca is using these *exempla* not normatively but *illustratively*, to show his reader how everyday exemplary discourse itself works—how the analogizer extrapolates from particular deeds and actors to acquire a concept of the good or virtue overall.
p. 146 For Seneca is not directly engaging in everyday exemplary discourse, but theorizing its operation, and ↳ providing illustrative examples of that operation to support his analysis (see section 7.4 below).

Along the same lines, there may also be a double-voiced quality to the word *uirtus* in 120.8 (as at *Ep.* 94.64, discussed in section 7.2). The analogizer, operating largely within everyday exemplary discourse, could reasonably evaluate the exemplary deeds of both Fabricius and Horatius in terms of the moral category *uirtus*—but in this word's traditional, narrow sense of "military valor." The *imago uirtutis* the analogizer derives from these *exempla* may, then, be a sense of how "military valor" manifests itself in general. Yet the phrase *imago uirtutis*, as noted above, can also be heard differently: a likeness that is not quite the "real thing." From the more advanced moral perspective of the Seneca who writes this letter, *uirtus* is indeed something beyond mere valor: it is Stoic "consistency of character," as the sequel makes abundantly clear, and the analogizer indeed does not yet have access to it.[34] This double perspective on *uirtus* echoes the double perspective on the two *exempla* more broadly: in both respects, Seneca is marking the distance between the beginning moral reasoner who works through analogy and everyday exemplarity, and the more philosophically sophisticated letter writer and reader who have progressed through the analogizing stage to a higher level.

In the next section, Seneca pursues further the idea of the likeness that may not be the "real thing." In a passage dense with the language of deceptive appearances, he explains that evils sometimes provide the outward semblance of the honorable, and that certain virtues and vices are similar enough to masquerade as one other (e.g., being generous or being a spendthrift). Such likenesses compel us to look closely (*adtendere*), in order to distinguish things that are apparently (*specie*) neighbors but in fact (*re*) are widely separated.[35] These observations recapitulate aspects of Seneca's analysis in *Ep.* 94, where he contends that vices, not virtues, spurred the four famous generals to their superficially admirable achievements. In the current letter, however, this argument takes on a further dimension. For having noted earlier that the analogizer—that is, the judging observer engaged with everyday exemplary discourse—chooses to overlook the vices that he knows exist under and around splendid deeds (*haec dissimulauimus*, 5), he is now
p. 147 instructing us not to be impressed by that showy surface but to ↳ probe critically below it in quest of those potentially lurking vices. For if we overlook vices, we assign the wrong value to actions and their performers. Thus Seneca is adumbrating a way of moving beyond the analogizing stage with its limitations, and achieving a more sophisticated and philosophically sound moral understanding.

Seneca goes on to describe this second, more advanced stage of concept formation and the revised process of moral evaluation associated with it (9–11):

> dum obseruamus eos quos insignes egregium opus fecerat, coepimus adnotare quis rem aliquam generoso animo fecisset et magno impetu, sed semel. hunc uidimus in bello fortem, in foro

> timidum, animose paupertatem ferentem, humiliter infamiam: factum laudauimus, contempsimus uirum. alium uidimus aduersus amicos benignum, aduersus inimicos temperatum, et publica et priuata sancte ac religiose administrantem … praeterea idem erat semper et in omni actu par sibi, iam non consilio bonus, sed more eo perductus ut non tantum recte facere posset, sed nisi recte facere non posset. intelleximus in illo perfectam esse uirtutem … ex quo ergo uirtutem intelleximus? ostendit illam nobis ordo eius et decor et constantia et omnium inter se actionum concordia et magnitudo super omnia efferens sese.
>
> While we observed those whom an outstanding deed had made notable, we began to remark who had done some deed with noble spirit and great energy, but only once. This man we saw to be brave in war, but faint-hearted in the Forum; enduring poverty with good spirit, but ill-repute abjectly: we praised the deed but despised the man. Another man we saw being benevolent toward his friends, mild toward his enemies, performing his public and private duties piously and conscientiously … moreover he was always the same and self-consistent in all his conduct, no longer deliberately "good" but brought by habituation to the point that he was not only able to act rightly, but could act in no way except rightly. We comprehended that in him virtue was complete/perfect … From what, then, have we comprehended virtue? What displays it to us is the man's regularity, propriety, consistency, the harmony of all his actions among themselves, and his greatness elevating itself above all things.

The narrative continues in the past tense, but Seneca marks this new stage with the *dum* clause and the verb of beginning (*coepimus*): while engaged in analogizing, we began to notice something we had not noticed before. Namely, we started to notice how frequently someone's actions displayed virtues, and whether his actions might also sometimes display vices. Here Seneca introduces a diachronic dimension, in which we
p. 148 observe an actor ↳ over time and we judge a number of actions, not just one.[36] *Exempli gratia*, he posits a man whom we saw to be brave in battle but timid in political life, and a man who endured poverty with fortitude but wilted in the face of invective. A virtue is thus displayed once in one arena, but a vice is visible in another arena; we have to observe long enough to see and judge the actor in both arenas.

These two examples of virtues paired with vices—military valor with political timidity, fortitude in poverty with wilting from ill-repute—seem to glance back at Horatius and Fabricius, the *exempla* of military valor and fortitude in poverty previously adduced. The vices he pairs with their virtues are purely hypothetical, however, for we know nothing else about either figure to support these ascriptions.[37] Yet Seneca's aim is not to overturn the conventionally positive judgments on the famous deeds of Horatius and Fabricius (and he does not name these figures here, lest we misinterpret his aim), but rather to assert more generally that one or two glorious deeds on their own provide insufficient evidence of the moral condition of the actor's soul or mind (*animus*). Recall that the analogizer, engaged in everyday exemplary discourse, simply marveled at a few showy deeds (*obstupefecerant, admirati sumus*, 5–6) and ignored vices he knew were present (*haec dissimulauimus*, 5). Now, Seneca suggests, we have moved to a higher level of moral sophistication: we have come to recognize that, to make defensible evaluations of an actor's moral status overall, we must observe his conduct in every arena over an extended period.

What we look for specifically, he goes on to explain (10), is consistency: virtuous performance of every action over time, and a consistent bearing in every situation (*semper idem, par sibi, ordo, constantia, concordia*). Consistency in right action allows us legitimately to infer the presence of complete or perfect virtue in the actor (*intelleximus in illo perfectam esse uirtutem*). This is no longer the mere "as though" perfection available to the analogizer (*tamquam perfecta*, 5), nor the "likeness" of virtue that the famous
p. 149 *exempla* provide (*imago uirtutis*, 8), but the real thing, legitimately known (*intelleximus . . . perfectam . . .* ↳ *uirtutem*): namely, *uirtus* in full Stoic raiment as "consistency of character," a broad overall quality extending far beyond the narrow, traditional concept of *uirtus* as "valor in battle" with which we began in

our analogizing stage.[38] The person who has attained it is of course the Stoic sage, whose characteristics Seneca further describes in subsequent portions of the letter (11–14, 18–22).

By the end of this exposition, Seneca resumes Lucilius's initial question, and claims to have answered it. He writes, "How, then, did this very thing become evident to us?" (*quomodo ergo hoc ipsum nobis apparuit?*, 12). The "rounding off" *ergo* marks his return to the overarching point, though *hoc ipsum* is ambiguous: possibly referring to the *bonum et honestum* about which Lucilius initially asked, or alternatively to the general characteristics of the virtuous life given in the previous section. Yet these possibilities converge, as Inwood observes, since the virtuous life includes possession of the *bonum* and *honestum*, and that life is instantiated in the figure of the *sapiens*, described here.[39]

In this letter, then, Seneca presents the beginning moral agent, the analogizer, as one who mostly engages in everyday exemplary discourse, with a small amount of idealizing added. From the perspective of someone who has advanced beyond that stage, Seneca acknowledges the necessity of starting this way, but deems this level of moral knowledge insufficient. It is valid, he agrees, to make inferences about an actor's moral state by observing his deeds. But such inferences are well grounded only when many actions in different arenas have been observed, and classified as virtuous or vicious, over a period of time. Everyday exemplary discourse, with its focus on individual great deeds, does not automatically meet this standard for well-groundedness. Fabricius and Horatius, Seneca's exemplary *exempla,* are cases in point: their one or two famous deeds, constituting all we know about them, provide too little information for us to determine their moral status overall—even if we concede that their famous deeds were motivated by virtues (which he seems to concede in this letter, but would not necessarily have conceded in *Ep.* 94). Lacking a broader base of actions observed over time and in various contexts, we cannot determine with sufficient philosophical rigor whether the good, the honorable, or virtue itself really reside in these figures.[40]

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7.4. *Exempla* and *Praeceptor*

In *Ep.* 94 and 120, then, Seneca delivers a vigorous Stoic attack upon everyday exemplary discourse. This discourse, he suggests, may founder on "misjudgment," when virtues are inferred from actions that are actually motivated by vices; or on "insufficient evidence," when judges focus on a few brilliant deeds and ignore the actor's performance in other dimensions of his life. Yet Seneca by no means rejects exemplarity altogether, in these letters or elsewhere. First, as noted above, his critique does not prevent him from using *exempla* in an illustrative, as opposed to injunctive, mode. In the cases of Alexander, Pompey, Fabricius, and Horatius, Seneca presents these examples as illustrating and substantiating prior general assertions about how everyday exemplary discourse works—namely that, in making the moral evaluations that it presents as injunctive and norm-setting, it misjudges or relies upon insufficient information. The discursive register of the injunctive mode as displayed in everyday exemplary discourse is moralizing and paraenetic, while the discursive register of Seneca's own, illustrative use of these figures is theoretical and "scientific." That is, Seneca makes the moralizing, paraenetic mode into the *topic* of his theoretical discourse.[41] Second, even as Seneca criticizes the injunctive use of *exempla* within everyday exemplary discourse, he is not rejecting altogether the injunctive use of *exempla.* He makes clear that, if people learn to evaluate correctly and assemble sufficient evidence on which to base evaluations—that is, if they adopt Stoic conceptions of value and standards of evidence—then they can pass valid moral judgments on others. Figures so judged can then serve as morally injunctive *exempla* providing positive or negative models for others.

Where is the Stoic to find such figures? Past figures may serve, as in everyday exemplary discourse—provided that enough information is transmitted to support valid inferences about their moral status. As noted above, the four "revalued" generals in *Ep.* 94 belong to this category: purportedly, there is enough information to judge them as vicious, and take them as models to be avoided. On the positive side, Seneca

routinely adduces Cato, Regulus, Tubero, Socrates, and the leaders of various philosophical schools as
p. 151 (near-)virtuous figures who can model for us successive stages of philosophical ↳ progression. For these figures too, sufficiently plentiful and detailed information is deemed to exist that legitimate judgments about their moral status can be passed.[42] Seneca emphasizes the normativity of such figures in *Ep.* 98.13. After adducing examples of past figures who endured "dispreferred" indifferents or who rejected things the crowd incorrectly values, he writes, "Let us too do something with spirit: let us be among the *exempla*" (i.e., among the names and actions just mentioned).[43] We encounter and learn about these past figures primarily through our reading—that is, literary texts are the principal monumental form that makes these figures available to the secondary audience that we constitute. Just as in everyday exemplary discourse, then, the Stoic can aspire to enter the canon of (Stoic) exemplary actors her- or himself by imitating past models encountered in literary texts. We may find the leisure to pursue such reading (if we are aristocrats) at one of our rural villas—another reason to withdraw from "the crowd" of the city, in order to find better company, paradoxically, in solitude.[44]

The Stoic may also look to his living contemporaries, whose comportment can be observed at first hand and over time, to provide injunctive moral models. In *Ep.* 94.39–40 Seneca recommends that those who have not yet arrived at a perfect condition of mind (*perfectum animi statum*) should spend time in the company of good men (*boni uiri*). There is no better way, he says, to clothe one's soul in what is honorable, or call it back to the right path: "That [sc. good men] be repeatedly seen and heard has the force of precepts."[45] Indeed, Seneca continues (94.41), time spent with a good man is beneficial even if he is silent. For like certain insect bites, the impact of such a man's company may not be felt at the moment of contact, but only in its
p. 152 aftereffects. Here ↳ the good man is explicitly *not* issuing verbal precepts, but merely modeling proper deportment.

Of course, no *boni uiri* in the strict Stoic sense are to be found. But Seneca means simply that those who are less advanced should seek out those who are more advanced, who can model what the next stages of philosophical progress look like.[46] In fact, to say that hearing and observing such people "has the force of precepts" recalls the dynamic of everyday exemplary discourse, in which people observe actions and derive norms from them—though the Senecan dynamic does not require the public eye, or the feedback loop with community values. In 94.42 Seneca returns to the defense of precepts, which is this letter's aim, and declares that good *praecepta* can be just as beneficial as good *exempla.* [47] Thus he seems to imply that observing the (Stoic) good man is indeed an exemplary dynamic, and that precept-giving can rise to the same level of moral authority and utility. In this passage, then, Seneca adumbrates a model of Stoic exemplarity in which the person who is less philosophically advanced keeps company with someone more advanced, and uses that person's deportment as an exemplary model for himself.

The figure of the *praeceptor*, as we have seen, is by definition further philosophically advanced than his charge. Therefore, if one is seeking a (Stoic) exemplary model among contemporaries, one's *praeceptor* is an obvious candidate. In *Ep.* 52 Seneca affirms that we may choose our moral helpers from among the living, namely those who, when they say such and such should be done (i.e., give precepts), prove it by doing it themselves, and are never caught doing what they say must be avoided.[48] The attention paid here to actions as well as words hints that we may be looking to this figure as an exemplary model, not just as a source of precepts. Again in *Ep.* 108 Seneca rails against philosophers who do not live according to their own *praecepta.* Such people, he avers, are *exempla* of useless training—making explicit that those who issue precepts stand as potential exemplary models for their charges' own conduct.[49]

p. 153 Seneca himself may even step into this preceptory/exemplary role. In *Ep.* 6, Seneca reports that Lucilius has asked him to send books he has found useful. Seneca assents, and says he will mark the most improving passages for easy reference (6.4–5). But even more beneficial than these words, he says, would be live interaction. To this end he invites Lucilius to come live with him, declaring that "the journey is long via precepts, but short and efficient via examples" (*longum iter est per praecepta, breue et efficax per exempla*,

6.5). To justify this invitation he then adduces *exempla* of philosophical disciples who benefited more from sharing their masters' lives than from hearing their words. These *exempla* are clearly being presented as models for Seneca's own relationship with Lucilius. The morally efficient *exemplum* being offered to Lucilius, then, is none other than the *praeceptor* Seneca himself and his pattern of living. To be sure, Seneca does not always present himself in an overtly exemplary or even praeceptorial role relative to Lucilius. Sometimes he appears rather as a co-striver, or as a sounding board, or merely as a source of philosophical dogma (as in *Ep.* 120)—a variety of roles that fall broadly under the general rubric of moral mirroring, a common way of casting the relationship between philosophical friends.[50] Nevertheless there are moments in this complex relationship in which Seneca makes so bold as to present himself as a model. In this letter he suggests his words are valuable to Lucilius, but that the exemplary dynamic of direct observation and experience is even more so.[51]

Yet, as noted above, Seneca is also alert to the beginner's or progressor's role as actor in her or his own right, and not merely as a judge of the behavior and performances of others. Where are *we*, as beginners or progressors, to find morally qualified audiences to judge *us*—judges in whose evaluations we may be confident—given that "the crowd," whose evaluations encourage vice rather than virtue, is ex hypothesi a poor judge? It turns out that the ideal judges of our own actions are identical with our ideal (Stoic) exemplary models. Seneca urges Lucilius to live as if he were being watched by a *uir bonus*, for example, by Cato or Scipio or Laelius (*Ep.* 11.8–10, 25.5–6), or failing that, perhaps by Seneca himself (*Ep.* 32.1). Patently Seneca is not offering himself as a *sapiens* on par with Cato, but merely as someone more advanced, who can usefully serve as an interlocutor and mirror. The judgments that a past figure like Cato might pass on
p. 154 oneself can only be imagined; a "judging ↳ Cato" must be entirely internalized. Contemporaries like Seneca, however, may serve as "real," living external judges of one's actions. In due course, the progressor may advance to the point where he can be trusted to judge himself (*Ep.* 25.6–7). At this point he has so completely internalized the Stoic evaluative gaze that he becomes his own authoritative evaluator, with no need for some other figure, imagined or real, as a prop.[52]

It may seem preposterous that Seneca, in earlier letters, recommends selecting a *sapiens* or more advanced friend as an exemplary model or judge (*Ep.* 11, 25, 32, 52), but only in later letters provides the philosophical justification for these recommendations (*Ep.* 94, 120). Yet it seems to me that this arrangement instantiates, in the structure of the collection, important principles about moral development that Seneca articulates explicitly within the collection. Specifically, in *Ep.* 94 Seneca says that beginners can be guided by precepts before being able to understand why those precepts are correct.[53] Within the epistolary collection itself, most scholars agree that the order of the letters (hence of their reading) matters, with simpler material presented earlier and philosophically and theoretically complex material being presented later.[54] The critiques of exemplarity in *Ep.* 94 and 120 are fundamental, yet complex and philosophically sophisticated; hence they are presented later in the collection, when Lucilius (or the reader) has notionally progressed to the point that he can understand them. Yet simple instructions that accord with these critiques (e.g., "Take *these particular* people as your exemplary models/judges") can be issued, without justification, much earlier in the collection, to guide the beginner.

7.5. Conclusion: A Stoic Exemplarity

To conclude, let us sketch out a Stoic exemplary discourse such as Seneca could endorse, and consider how it differs from everyday exemplary discourse. We return to the four-stage model of the latter, as described in section 7.1 above. Regarding the first stage, the Stoic actor does not seek out the public eye, or "the crowd's" approval. This is, if anything, a bad moral influence and a source of corruption. Rather, the Stoic actor seeks to perform proper functions consistently, the moral standard for which appeals to "nature," not shared
p. 155 communal values. The evaluative gaze looms large rhetorically and ↳ ideologically, but its source—one's notional judging audience—is the *sapiens* (rare, but known textually), or a living contemporary who is more advanced morally and philosophically than oneself (e.g., one's *praeceptor*), or an internalized image of one of these figures.

Regarding the second stage, the Stoic judge attaches little weight to individual actions he observes others performing. For he knows that any given action, however admirable in appearance, may be motivated by a vice rather than a virtue, or that vices may be evident in other performances by this actor. Instead, this judge attends to consistency of action over time and in diverse circumstances. It is not individual *res gestae*, but long-term patterns of action, that reveal the true moral state of the actor. Indeed, there is no other way to know the internal states of others except via long-term observation. It follows that Stoic exemplarity, unlike everyday exemplarity, does not valorize the battlefield and Forum as arenas of especially significant performance. For the Stoics, performances in these arenas are no more or less revealing than performances in any other arena, and besides are morally significant only in the aggregate.

Regarding the third stage, the Stoic seems to regard literary texts as the most useful monumental form. If one cannot be a primary observer who gathers evidence for a social actor's moral condition from direct personal observation over time, and instead can only encounter the actor through monumental mediation as a secondary observer, literary texts seem to be the only monumental form that can provide information in sufficient detail and density to approximate direct observation—enabling secondary audiences to identify patterns of action over time and so to make judgments about the actor's moral condition overall. Other monumental forms may suffice for commemorating the single deeds so beloved of everyday exemplary discourse, and may have their uses even for the Stoic (e.g., the cognomen *Magnus*, from which Seneca makes so much hay in *Ep.* 94.62–5). But only literary texts, among monumental forms, have the information-carrying capacity that the Stoic judge requires.

Regarding the fourth stage, the Stoic exemplary actor is every bit as normative as the everyday exemplary actor: she or he provides a model for the judging audience to imitate, and/or a standard by which those judges may evaluate other actors in turn.

Thus Stoic exemplarity is constantly in dialogue with everyday exemplarity. It appropriates its organization, language, and social positions; its prestige as a mode of moral and social reproduction; and its sheer familiarity. It harnesses these elements to create an alternative, Stoic exemplary discourse that is at once familiar and novel, and which, while grafted onto and growing out of everyday exemplary discourse, is ultimately supposed to supplant it. Stoic ethics regularly employs "common-sense" moral views as starting
p. 156 points for moral argumentation, though it often ends up with understandings quite ↳ remote from those starting points—a distance that the Stoics underscored and turned to pedagogical advantage when they formulated and explained their "paradoxes." Thus it is unsurprising that Stoic exemplarity, as Seneca presents it, bootstraps itself up from everyday exemplarity, progressively modifying key underlying assumptions until an endpoint is reached that is substantively quite different from the starting point.[55]

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I am grateful to Katharina Volk and Gareth Williams, who organized the splendid conference at which this chapter was first presented, and to the other participants and audience members for stimulating conversation and suggestions. I particularly thank Shadi Bartsch, Brad Inwood, Gretchen Reydams-Schils, Gareth Williams, and an anonymous referee for their comments on earlier versions, which vastly improved the final product. They assuredly do not agree with everything stated here.

Notes

1 On the structure and features of exemplary discourse, see Roller 2004: 1–7, 2009: 214–19. For specifically historiographical perspectives see Chaplin 2000, Walter 2004: 51–70, Hölkeskamp 2004: 169–98.

2 On the community-oriented character of everyday Roman values (especially, but not only, aristocratic), and their inculcation under the community's gaze, see Feldherr 1998, Roller 2001: 20–7, Bartsch 2006: 117–38; Flaig 2005 offers a particular case study.

3 In other respects—e.g., the assumption that the exemplary actor and her/his deed are normative (stage 4)—Seneca accepts the presuppositions of everyday exemplary discourse: see section 7.5.

4 On the parallels and interrelationship of these letters, see Bellincioni 1979: 17–24, Schafer 2009: 76–7.

5 E.g., *Ep.* 94.15: *leges autem philosophiae* [i.e., *decreta*] *breues sunt et omnia alligant*; cf. 95.12, 59–64 on the relationship between *praecepta* and *decreta,* with Cancik 1967: 42–5, Kidd 1978: 251–7, Habinek 1989: 241–5, Mitsis 1993: 293–304, Inwood 2005: 115–22, Schafer 2009: 85–110. Rhetoric: at *Ep.* 95.60 Seneca notes (tongue in cheek) that the statement "*decreta* are useless" is itself a *decretum*; we may perhaps infer *decreta* from statements in 95.7–8, 11, and 63 (see Mitsis 1993: 301, Inwood 2005: 122). Seneca also calls them *placita, scita, dogmata*, and even *praecepta generalia* (95.10, 94.31).

6 Other examples of *praecepta* are given in 94.11, 15, 26 (implied), 27–8, 43, 46–7, 51; *Ep.* 95.37, 51, 63, 66. For precepts enjoining *kathekonta* (*officia*) in particular situations, see *Ep.* 94.32, 37; 95.45; Bellincioni 1979: 18, Inwood 2005: 116–17, Schafer 2009: 54–8.

7 On the "reminding" (*admonitio*) function of precepts, see *Ep.* 94.25–6. In 94.21 *monitio* seems to be categorized along with *consolatio* and *exhortatio* within the "preceptive part" of philosophy, while 94.39 presents these terms and a few others within a different hierarchy; cf. 95.65. On the Posidonian/Peripatetic background to these categories, and their various possible hierarchies, see Kidd 1988: 647–9.

8 The *sapiens* probably has no need for precepts as he can deduce what action is required from first principles, i.e., *decreta* (so Aristo argues at *Ep.* 94.8). For the special pertinence of *praecepta* to beginners/progressors, see Kidd 1978: 254, Inwood 2005: 110–11, 115–19, Schafer 2009: 109–10.

9 *Ep.* 94.50: *interim etiam imperfecto sed proficienti* [in contrast to the *perfectus,* mentioned in the previous sentence] *demonstranda est in rebus agendis uia . . . inbecillioribus quidem ingeniis necessarium est aliquem praeire: "hoc uitabis, hoc facies."* This image of the *praeceptor* may have a literary pedigree: it recalls Horace's father shaping his son through relevant precepts (Hor. *Serm.* 1.4.103–29). Yet Horace's father claims to be "traditional" in his moral outlook and explicitly eschews philosophy (*Serm.* 1.4.115–20), while Seneca's *praeceptor* is a relatively advanced Stoic and hence deeply philosophically invested, even if he says the same kinds of things.

10 *Ep.* 94.52: *interim omissis argumentis nonne apparet opus esse nobis aliquo aduocato qui contra populi praecepta praecipiat?* 55: *sit ergo aliquis custos et aurem subinde peruellat abigatque rumores et reclamet populis laudantibus . . . itaque monitionibus crebris opiniones quae nos circumsonant repellantur*.

11 See Bellincioni's comments ad loc. On how we go wrong following the judgments of the many, see *Ep.* 75.15, 99.16–17, 123.6; *De uita beata* 1.3–4.

12 *Ep.* 94.59: *necessarium itaque admoneri est, habere aliquem aduocatum bonae mentis et in tanto fremitu tumultuque falsorum unam denique audire uocem. quae erit illa uox? ea scilicet quae tibi tantis clamoribus ambitionis exsurdato salubria insusurret uerba*. Note again that the reader, now addressed in the second-person singular (*tibi*), is still being assimilated to the beginner/progressor who needs the preceptor's instruction.

13 *Ep.* 94.59–60: *quae erit illa uox? ea scilicet . . . quae dicat: non est quod inuideas . . .* (three further precepts, each introduced by *non est quod . . .* , follow). The *praeceptor*'s voice clearly begins with *non est quod inuideas . . .* , but it is unclear where, or whether, that voice ends: see n. 21.

14 *Ep.* 94.61 (vices in boldface, active/passive reversals underlined): *ut uincerent hostem,* ***cupiditate*** *uicti sunt. nemo illis uenientibus restitit, sed nec ipsi* ***ambitioni crudelitatique*** *restiterant ; tunc cum agere alios uisi sunt, agebantur*. On the

active/passive dynamic, see Bellincioni 1979 ad loc.

15 For *exempla* conjoined with precepts in paraenetic contexts, see, e.g., *Marc.* 2.1: *scio a praeceptis incipere omnis qui monere aliquem uolunt, in exemplis desinere* (note that *exempla* are here said to share the *monitio* function that is central to *praecepta* in general). See also *Ep.* 94.42 (*praecepta* can be as beneficial as *exempla*), 6.5 (ditto, but *exempla* are faster: see below), 95.65–6 (where a verbal description of the good man provides the *exemplar uirtutis* to accompany precepts about *uirtus*, and provides a model for imitation). Scholarly discussion of *exempla*, *praecepta*, and paraenesis is found in Cancik 1967: 22–7, Mayer 1991: 165–7, Hachmann 1995: 80–1, Schafer 2009: 85–91. Broadly speaking, Roman rhetoric so commonly features general statements followed by substantiating examples that the implications of this structure may pass unremarked. Yet *exempla* only become interpretable in relation to a governing generalization. For further discussion, see section 7.3 regarding *Ep.* 120.6–7.

16 The following analysis is based on Roller 2001: 88–92, with different focus.

17 Seneca typically, though not invariably, judges Alexander negatively: see Bellincioni 1979 ad loc. for discussion and parallels.

18 We might expect a reference to his magistracies, to align this *exemplum* with the devaluation of office holding articulated in the precepts of 94.60. The phrase *ad continuandam potentiam* may allude to the magisterial side of his career, i.e., his consulships, triumviral power, and the extraordinary commands he received one after another (which Seneca discusses at length at *Ben.* 5.16.4).

19 Similar plays on Pompey's cognomen at *Brev.* 13.7, *Marc.* 14.3.

20 See n. 38.

21 Is the *praeceptor*, whose voice was introduced at 94.60 (see n. 13) still speaking, or has Seneca's own voice resumed? It seems reasonable to attribute the *exempla* narrated in 62–7 to the same voice that issues the precepts governing them in 60–1. But do we accept a change of voice (with Schafer 2009: 19) here at 68? To my eyes the two voices eventually merge imperceptibly, to the extent they were ever really distinct. For when Seneca declares (59) that a *praeceptor* is needed to say certain things, and when he immediately (60) supplies the statements he has just said are required, he becomes the *praeceptor* in relation to Lucilius and to the reader in the very act of declaring that such a person is needed (see also section 7.4 below).

22 A striking metaphor of "separation" pervades this passage. The stem of *retexo,* namely *tex-*, "join together, weave," is semantically very close to *sermo*'s stem *ser-*, "link, join, string together." So to "unjoin *exempla*" is also to "empty your breast of bad linkages," which is also, as he says shortly thereafter, to "separate yourself from the crowd." On this metaphor, see Short 2012: 191–3. The word *exemplum* itself participates in the metaphor, being etymologically "something taken out" (from *eximo*).

23 A Stoic might argue that the military and political achievements of these four generals (and other such figures) are defensible as "proper functions" (*kathekonta*)—actions appropriate to and justifiable in terms of the social roles these figures are discharging. But Stoics also contend that proper functions can be discharged accidentally, spurred by a vice rather than a virtue. Seneca's stress on the vices that motivated these generals' actions may suggest that this is his angle (indeed, Seneca says in *Ep.* 95.65 that Posidonius was concerned to describe each virtue and vice exactly, so that those that were similar could be told apart: Kidd 1988: 650–1, Bellincioni 1979 ad loc.). In fact, however, he does not seem to concede even that their actions are proper, let alone virtuous. On proper functions and social roles, see Long and Sedley 1987: 1.427–8 and Reydams-Schils 2005: 59–69 (who discusses the roles associated with amicable, affiliative relationships rather than hostile ones).

24 This paraphrase condenses *Ep.* 94.69–70: *magna pars sanitatis est hortatores insaniae reliquisse et ex isto coitu inuicem noxio procul abisse . . . non est per se magistra innocentiae solitudo nec frugalitatem docent rura, sed ubi testis ac spectator abscessit, uitia subsidunt . . .* (70) *quis eam quam nulli ostenderet induit purpuram? quis posuit secretam in auro dapem? . . . nemo oculis suis lautus est, ne paucorum quidem aut familiarium, sed apparatum uitiorum suorum pro modo turbae spectantis expandit*. Similarly *Ep.* 99.16–17, *Tranq.* 15.6. The moral distinction between *rus* and *urbs* articulated here draws upon a traditional, stereotyped dichotomy ascribing negative moral value to urban pursuits and positive moral value to activities associated with the rural villa—namely farming, and the *otium* that facilitates literary and philosophical activity. Yet here Seneca gives that old dichotomy a novel philosophical twist, for he rearticulates it in terms of the presence or absence of a communal evaluative gaze, and thereby enlists it on the side of Stoic ethics against everyday ethical discourse.

25 On the poor judgment of the many in Seneca, see Bartsch 2006: 196–8, with further references. In *Ep.* 25.5–6 Seneca urges the beginner always to be under the gaze of a good man, because "solitude encourages every vice in us" (*omnia nobis mala solitudo persuadet*; similarly *Ep.* 11.9). The contradiction with 94.69–70 is only apparent, however: the former passage implies that *solitudo* is morally damaging compared to being under the gaze of virtuous judges, while the latter passage implies that *solitudo* is morally improving compared to being under the gaze of vicious judges. Both can be true simultaneously (cf. *Ep.* 25.7 for the same idea cast differently).

26 *Ep.* 94.72: *itaque si in medio urbium fremitu conlocati sumus, stet ad latus monitor et contra laudatores ingentium patrimoniorum laudet paruo diuitem et usu opes metientem. contra illos qui gratiam ac potentiam attollunt otium ipse suspiciat traditum litteris et animum ab externis ad sua reuersum*.

27 *Ep.* 120.1: *epistula tua . . . hanc* [sc. *quaestiunculam*] *expediri desiderat, quomodo ad nos boni honestique notitia peruenerit*. This letter has attracted scholarly attention in recent years for its elucidation of Stoic ideas about concept formation: Inwood 2005: 283–99, 2007: 322–32; Schafer 2009: 91–2.

28 *Ep.* 120.2: *bonum putant esse aliqui id quod utile est . . . honestum putant cui ratio recti officii constat*. On these definitions and the relationship between the terms, see Inwood 2005: 283–4; also *Ep.* 118.8–12 with Inwood 2007: 310–14, 323. On the good in Stoicism more generally, see Long and Sedley 1987: 1.374–6.

29 As it more clearly does in 120.11, discussed below; see also Long and Sedley's note on this passage (1987: 2.367).

30 Seneca employs past tenses of verbs throughout his description of this two-stage development. His use of past tenses regarding the first stage therefore does not, by itself, mark it as temporally prior to the subsequent developments.

31 Cicero, in his own discussion of the nature of the good at *Paradoxa Stoicorum* 12, likewise mentions Horatius and Fabricius together (though among other figures, and with minimal narrative elaboration). Seneca's exposition here may thus have Ciceronian inspiration. Roller 2004: 10–28 examines the Horatius *exemplum* in general; the argument following is based loosely on Roller 2001: 92–4, with different emphasis.

32 On the implications of the structure whereby general statements are followed by exempla, see n. 15.

33 Our "marveling" at Fabricius's deeds (*admirati sumus,* 120.6) may exemplify the more general statement of how fine-appearing deeds "left us awestruck" (*obstupefecerant*, 5)—in both cases, suggesting a blunting of critical faculties in the face of compelling spectacle, and a willingness to ignore evidence inconsistent with our impression.

34 For the different senses of *uirtus*, and Seneca's exploitation of the gap between them, see Roller 2001: 22–6, 99–108 (with further bibliography).

35 Sen. *Ep.* 120.8–9 (underlined words and phrases suggest deceptive appearances): *adiciam quod mirum fortasse uideatur: mala interdum speciem honesti obtulere et optimum ex contrario enituit . sunt enim, ut scis, uirtutibus uitia confinia , et perditis quoque ac turpibus recti similitudo est: sic mentitur prodigus liberalem . . . imitatur neglegentia facilitatem, temeritas fortitudinem. haec nos similitudo coegit adtendere et distinguere specie quidem uicina, re autem plurimum inter se dissidentia*. Cf. *Ep.* 95.65.

36 This is a new development of his observation in 120.5, that the appearance and splendor of noteworthy deeds concealed underlying vices. It differs both from the claim of 120.8–9 above, that vices and virtues may resemble one another, and from the claim of *Ep.* 94.60–8, that noteworthy deeds may be motivated by vices not virtues.

37 Seneca stresses the consistency of Fabricius's two actions: *eiusdem animi fuit auro non uinci, ueneno non uincere* (similarly at *Prov.* 3.6, where slightly more information about him is given). Note that he is therefore not subject to the active/passive reversals that characterize the vice-ridden commanders in *Ep.* 94.61 (see n. 14): they conquered and were conquered; he neither conquers nor is conquered. Even so, one can posit that vices may be manifest in other dimensions of his life. The question whether Horatius ever stood for high office, which would entail activity in the Forum, is addressed at Serv. *Aen.* 8.646 and Dion. Hal. 5.25.3 (discussion in Roller 2004: 12–14). But these texts give no indication of *timiditas*.

38 For Stoic virtue as "consistency of character," see Long and Sedley 1987: 1.383. *Virtus* so conceptualized is said to encompass the four cardinal virtues, as Seneca makes clear in 120.11: see Inwood 2005: 288–9, Classen 2000: 276–7.

39 Inwood 2007: 327–8.

40 Inwood 2007: 325 suggests that Fabricius and Horatius fail as *exempla uirtutis* because, as historical figures, they are not known through direct experience, which is necessary for the requisite observation and information-gathering. I agree that they fail (according to Seneca) due to insufficient information. But in my view their pastness contributes to this insufficiency without being decisive in itself. For Seneca is demonstrably willing to pass moral judgment on certain past figures, provided the traditions surrounding them are sufficiently rich—notably Cato (on whose exemplarity, see Inwood 2005: 295), and also the famous commanders of *Ep.* 94 (section 7.2 above), now "known" to be vicious rather than virtuous.

41 For these two discursive registers in Seneca, see Cancik 1967: 16–35. Habinek 1989: 241–5 calls these registers "scientific" and "traditional"; Schafer 2009: 76–7 distinguishes "technical" and "non-technical" (though this may not be the same distinction). On illustrative vs. injunctive uses of *exempla,* see Roller 2004: 52–3, Chaplin 2000: 137–40 (with different terminology).

42 See, e.g., *Ep.* 6.6, 24.3–11, 25.4–6, 95.69–73, 98.12–13, 104.21–2, 27–33, *Prov.* 3.3–14. On taking great philosophers and/or other past figures as one's models and judges, see Bartsch 2006: 200–2, Reydams-Schils 2011a: 300–2. Inwood 2005: 295 credits the "rich narrative" concerning Cato and Socrates, and their "special status in the philosophical tradition," with making them available as Stoic *exempla.* The praise they conventionally receive in everyday exemplary discourse no doubt enhances their prima facie credibility as examples of Stoic virtue.

43 *Ep.* 98.12 lists figures who endured fire, torture, exile, etc.; 98.13 lists figures who rejected wealth and office. Then: *nos*

quoque aliquid et ipsi faciamus animose: simus inter exempla. . . . quidquid fieri potuit potest. Likewise *Ep.* 11.12.

44 Explicitly at *De otio* 1.1: *meliores erimus singuli. quid quod secedere ad optimos uiros et aliquod exemplum eligere ad quod uitam derigamus licet? quod <nisi> in otio non fit* (similarly *Ep.* 11.9, 25.6–7, *Brev.* 14–15; also *Ep.* 94.72 for the elevated moral status of the person devoted to literature). See also nn. 24–5 above.

45 *Ep.* 94.40: *nulla res magis animis honesta induit dubiosque et in prauum inclinabiles reuocat ad rectum quam bonorum uirorum conuersatio; paulatim enim descendit in pectora et uim praeceptorum obtinet frequenter aspici, frequenter audiri*. Similarly *Ep.* 98.17: *quid faciendum sit a faciente discendum est* (here the deontic language of the precept emerges from observing someone's actions); also 102.30. While Seneca can speak of dead philosophers and other historical figures as being alive and present to the progressor through their works (e.g., *Ep.* 25.6, 104.21–2, *Brev.* 14–15), in the passages just cited he is clearly talking about living contemporaries.

46 In *Ep.* 94.39–40 the man with whom you should spend time is indifferently called *bonus, magnus*, and *sapiens.* In "orthodox" Stoicism, such virtue language is only applicable to the *sapiens*. But Seneca sometimes applies it to progressors, as if to give them credit for steps achieved. Roskam 2005: 88–9 discusses this phenomenon in *Ep.* 95 specifically, attributing it to Aristo's influence (also p. 95, citing E. Spring). *Tranq.* 7.4–5 likewise recommends choosing the "least bad" man as your friend, in the absence of a (real) *sapiens*. I thank Gretchen Reydams-Schils for discussion of this matter.

47 *Ep.* 94.42: *"quorsus" inquis "huc pertinet?" aeque praecepta bona, si saepe tecum sint, profutura quam bona exempla*. See also *Helv.* 18.8, *Ep.* 68.1, and Schafer 2009: 90–2 for *exempla* replacing *praecepta*, or replicating their impact.

48 *Ep.* 52.7–8: *"quem" inquis "inuocabo? hunc aut illum?" . . . ex his autem qui sunt* [i.e., the living] *eligamus . . . eos qui uita docent, qui cum dixerunt quid faciendum sit probant faciendo, qui docent quid uitandum sit nec umquam in eo quod fugiendum dixerunt deprehenduntur*.

49 *Ep.* 108.36: *nullos autem peius mereri de omnibus mortalibus iudico quam . . . qui aliter uiuunt quam uiuendum esse praecipiunt. exempla enim se ipsos inutilis disciplinae circumferunt, nulli non uitio quod insequuntur obnoxii*. Cf. *Ep.* 6.6; also at 94.9 Aristo makes a similar complaint about people who issue precepts. The harmony between deeds and words looked for in these passages is another dimension of the consistency of the good man, as discussed earlier.

50 On friends as mirrors, see Bartsch 2006: 52–4, with references to the Aristotelian background. Schafer 2009: 67–74 stresses the pedagogical dynamic between Seneca as teacher and Lucilius as ever-improving progressor. This dynamic is assuredly present, but is not the whole story.

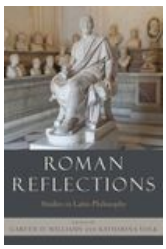
51 Bartsch 2006: 201–2 remarks that Seneca rarely offers living figures as possible external judges or exemplary guides. It is true that few such figures are named by name. But the *praeceptor* as a type neatly fills this slot. On the *praeceptor* as model/*exemplum,* see also Schafer 2009: 90–1, 109.

52 On external and internalized judges of one's own actions, see Bartsch 2006: 191–208, esp. 198–202; more briefly, Roller 2001: 84–8, Schafer 2009: 109, Reydams-Schils 2011a: 301–2.

53 *Ep.* 94.31, 50–1.

54 On the structure of the corpus and the importance of epistolary sequence, see, e.g., Cancik 1967: 138–51 (on the first eleven books), Wilson 2001: 183–6, Schafer 2009: 68–9 (also discussing how the letters are self-referential, instantiating the very things they talk about).

55 This distance too can be measured via paradoxical formulations, e.g., withdrawing into solitude to the company of good men (*De otio* 1.1, n. 44). Scholars commonly use terms like "get off the ground," "launch," or "bootstrap" to describe how Stoics derive their ethics from "common conceptions": see, e.g., Inwood 2005: 76, Roller 2001: 77, Bartsch 2006: 9, 236; different language but same idea at Schafer 2009: 109. Stoics could also return, through different routes, to "common-sense" notions after making their paradoxical points: see *Ben.* 2.35.2–3.



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END MATTER

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