

**'Wrestling anger: An investigation into Seneca's approach
to the management of passion through Stoic philosophy'**

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Declaration of Authorship

I, Alexandra Christina Frost, hereby declare that this thesis and the work presented in it is entirely my own. Where I have consulted the work of others, this is always clearly stated.

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Date: 8th May 2018

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Abstract

This thesis asks how passions, in particular anger, can be managed through practising Stoic philosophy. I explore the role of the Stoic theory of passions in Seneca’s writing and situate him within Stoic theory. I explore how *Medea* and *Thyestes* reflect his vision of anger communicated in *De Ira* and *De Clementia* by treating his protagonists as case-studies of individuals with extreme anger to assess whether they could be improved by Stoicism.

Chapter One situates Seneca within the Stoic theory of passions by considering how he responds to his predecessors, how he follows orthodox doctrines, how he was influenced by later thinkers and where he advances philosophical doctrines. Chapter Two analyses anger in *De Ira* and *De Clementia* and compares Stoic perceptions with those of Aristotle and the Epicureans and compares its presentation in Seneca’s prose and dramas. Chapter Three considers how to extirpate anger according to the advice offered in Seneca’s moral essays. It traces the techniques’ origins, considering whether they are philosophical, depend on Stoic doctrines, if they are practical solutions or a combination. I critique their feasibility as remedies for passions. Chapter Four presents the Stoic elements pertinent to passions in the selected plays. It explores the anti-Stoic interpretation of Senecan drama, the reasons for philosophy’s prevalence and how his drama reflects his moral theory. Chapter Five asks whether *Medea* and *Atreus* reflect a Stoic perspective and how they would benefit by adopting a philosophical outlook. It considers possible audience responses and identifies potential ‘cures’ and whether the characters attempt to address their anger.

In conclusion, I accept Seneca’s account of anger and deduce that practising Stoic techniques can help remove anger. While the opportunity for cures in the characters is not applied, the educative function of Senecan drama invites the audience to learn from the protagonists’ failures.

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Abbreviations

Abbreviations used are as listed in the Oxford Classical Dictionary 4th edition, with the addition of the following:

Alex. Aphr.	Alexander of Aphrodisias
<i>Beat.</i>	<i>De vita beata</i>
<i>Brev.</i>	<i>De vitae brevitate</i>
<i>Carm. aur.</i>	<i>Golden Verses</i>
<i>De lib. at. aegr.</i>	<i>De libidine et aegritudine</i>
<i>De nat. hom.</i>	<i>De natura hominis</i>
<i>De Stoic. rep.</i>	<i>De Stoicorum repugnantiiis</i>
<i>Dissert.</i>	<i>Discourses</i>
EK	Edelstein and Kidd
<i>Ench.</i>	<i>Encheiridion</i>
Epict.	Epictetus
HO	<i>Hercules Oetaeus</i>
<i>Ir.</i>	<i>De Ira</i>
LS	Long and Sedley
<i>Marc.</i>	<i>Ad Marciam</i>
Nem.	Nemesius
<i>Parad. Stoic.</i>	<i>Paradoxa Stoicorum</i>
<i>Phaed.</i>	<i>Phaedra</i>
<i>Phoen.</i>	<i>Phoenissae</i>
PHP	<i>De Placitis Hippocratis et Platonis</i>
<i>Plac.</i>	<i>Placita philosophorum</i>
<i>Poly.</i>	<i>Ad Polybium</i>
<i>Prov.</i>	<i>De Providentia</i>
Pythag.	Pythagoras
<i>Oct.</i>	<i>Octavia</i>
<i>Oed.</i>	<i>Oedipus</i>
<i>Ot.</i>	<i>De Otio</i>
<i>Thy.</i>	<i>Thyestes</i>
<i>Troad.</i>	<i>Troades</i>

Translations

I use translations of *De Ira* by Kaster (2010) and *De Clementia* by Braund (2009). I quote from *Medea* translated by Boyle (2014), *Thyestes* by Wilson (2010) and the *Epistles* by Gummere (Volume 1 1917, 1996; Volume 2, 1920, 1970; Volume 3 1925, 2000).

Quotations of Cicero *Tusculanae disputationes* are translated by Graver (2002), Galen *De Placitis Hippocratis et Platonis* by De Lacy (1978-84) and Philodemus *De Ira* by Tsouna (2007). Other translations will be referenced accordingly.

Unless stated to the contrary, all citations of ancient literature are written by Seneca. References denoted numerically in brackets without an accompanying title are passages of *De Ira*.

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Introduction

The principal research questions

The central questions of my research relate to the nature of passions and how they can be managed through practising Stoic philosophy, according to Seneca’s presentation of the School’s doctrines. The purpose of focusing on anger specifically is to apply its presentation in Seneca to advance current understanding of the established Stoic theory of the passions. Anger is the primary focus because it is the most severe and destructive passion and its catastrophic consequences mean that it particularly requires attention to prevent it from arising. By examining the worst type of emotional problem, it is possible to analyse the usefulness of philosophy against its most difficult challenge. With a particular interest in Stoic philosophy, as well as being a politician, moral advisor and author, Seneca provides insight into Stoicism and other philosophical schools’ views about how to live well, a goal he actively strove to achieve, and persuasively encourages his readers to do the same.¹ I focus on the Stoic elements of Seneca’s arguments because these best illustrate how Stoicism offers cures for the problem of passions, though reference to his relationship with other thinkers is relevant to complete the picture of his beliefs about anger. Seneca is recognised for his literary ability across many genres. Through his prolific writing he manages to combine his philosophical interests and wish to entertain by incorporating subtle moral suggestions in his plays when he includes Stoic themes in his dramas. His adaptability enables him to appeal to a larger audience than those who read his prose work, including those who observe and read his plays.

¹ Cf. Veyne (2003) pp. 5-9.

Seneca's *De Ira*, a prose work dedicated to anger, forms the foundation of my research regarding *ira*'s nature and management and detailed analysis of this text is provided in Chapter Two in preparation for further discussion. References to this topic found in his other works will help to complete Seneca's picture of anger. I draw on elements of *De Clementia* because *ira* is an alternative (and inappropriate) response compared to *clementia*. Where appropriate, I reference the *Epistles* for insights into the nature of passions and advice about they can be managed, as well as using Seneca's letters as evidence of Stoic ethical theory. Regarding terminology, Cicero admitted to having problems translating the Greek *pathē* and concluded that the most appropriate Latin word is *perturbationes* (cf. Cic. *Tusc.* 3.7; Cic. *Fin.* 3.35). Seneca chooses the term *passions* or *adfectus* (cf. 1.1.1, 1.1.7, 1.3.6) as they are something from which people 'suffer' and they are a *vice* or *vitium* (cf. 1.1.5, 1.3.7). I believe that this is captured in the English translation of *adfectus* as 'passions' in preference to 'emotions'.²

My research enquires into the role of the Stoic theory of passions in Seneca's writing and through a detailed investigation of the role played by Stoic ideas in the plays *Medea* and *Thyestes*, I will explore the extent to which the tragedies are illustrations of his presentation of anger communicated in *De Ira*. I examine why and how Seneca uses different methods to convey similar philosophical messages in his violent dramas and his more considered moral essays and *Epistles*. Studying these texts enables a clearer understanding of the battle with passions and aims to consider how their problems can be resolved. I analyse the presence of the psychology of passions in the tragedies *Medea* and *Thyestes* and have chosen these plays because the protagonists display anger in its extreme state when they take revenge by murdering their enemies' children. There are other characters in Seneca's plays which embody similar characteristics and attitudes towards anger such as Clytemnestra in *Agamemnon*, Juno in the prologue to *Hercules Furens*, Achilles and Pyrrhus in the *Troades*,

² Translations of '*pathē/adfectus*' vary amongst scholars between the use of 'emotion' and 'passions'. For example, 'emotion' is used by Brennan (2003, 2006) pp. 257ff. and Konstan (2015), whereas Inwood (2005, 2008) and Asmis (2015) choose 'passions'.

Theseus' curse in *Phaedra* (*Phaed.* lines 947, 1207), the sibling feud in *Phoenissae* and Oedipus in *Oedipus*. However, these plays will not be included in my discussion because the sustained anger of Medea and Atreus and the extreme consequences of their *ira* best provide appropriate case studies for the exploration of this passion.

I question the extent to which Seneca's tragic characters in *Medea* and *Thyestes* display Stoic sympathies and how they would benefit from adopting a philosophical approach. I analyse Medea and Atreus as if they were case studies of real people with severe emotional problems rather than fictitious dramatic devices, examining any evidence of potential cognitive and behavioural improvement in order to establish whether the characters do or should take steps to cure their anger. In this way I can assess whether, if the characters behaved in this way in the real world, they could be reformed through the application of the techniques recommended by Seneca in *De Ira*, with particular attention to their Stoic elements. This methodology, in effect treating Seneca's characters as *exempla*, will enable the use of Medea and Atreus as instances of how not to behave and how their examples could generate reflection in an audience to motivate self-improvement.³ The purpose of these questions is to assist in improving modern understanding about Seneca's project of educating his audience and readers in virtue and vice. The presence of philosophical ideas in the plays provides an opportunity to consider the possibility of a Stoic world within the tragedies to address the problems which arise when reason is not operating at the centre of the human mind. This interpretation of the characters indicates that in a Stoic world there would be a better outcome for the individuals and the community. The generic and plot constraints of tragedy and their purpose of reflecting human psychology could justify why the characters are not redeemable.

³ For Seneca's use of *exempla*, see pp. 22, 43-4, 118-9, 156-7, 168-70, Chapter Five *passim*.

The questions I am posing are important areas of research because of the significance passions play in human lives and the need for a solution to the problems that they cause. In addition, the questions contribute to the debate about Seneca's use of philosophy by analysing the extent to which he adopts, modifies or develops early Stoic ways of thinking. By emphasising the cognitive elements of passions, as Stoics do, as opposed to seeing them as feelings over which the individual has no control, I seek to demonstrate how by governing thoughts and choosing reactions appropriately one can avoid becoming angry specifically through the application of Seneca's proposed methods. I examine the development of the Stoic theory of passions from conception, noting Seneca's relationship with the orthodox views, the debates within the School, as well as identifying the areas of the doctrines he advances. This analysis will reveal the extent to which Seneca's advice for managing and curing anger is philosophically grounded, based on practical measures and a combination of these, as well as considering the potential effectiveness of using different approaches.

Traditionally, scholarly interest in Seneca's works tends to be divided into his style, philosophy or the genre in which he writes. More recently, there has been research into 'seeing Seneca whole', i.e. consolidating his various works to find a more complete picture of this prolific author, drawing ideas together about his political and philosophical views and how common themes and styles align his thinking.⁴ I intend to combine the conventional elements of research with a close reading of specific prose and dramatic texts to demonstrate the parallels in his philosophical lessons and how Seneca educates his reader/audience in managing their passions through reading and experiencing his different genres. This will also involve the applicability of Stoicism to Seneca's plays by exploring the extent to which philosophical ideas are included and evidence of these with regard to the protagonists of *Medea* and *Thyestes* in particular. The extensive analysis of anger as a concept from different philosophical and non-philosophical perspectives and presentations will produce a detailed picture of the

⁴ Cf. Volk and Williams (eds.) (2006); Bartsch and Schiesaro (eds.) (2015).

problem which it poses. This intertextual research facilitates a comprehensive understanding of Seneca's philosophical theory of the passions, especially anger, from which it will be possible to comprehend his guidance on living well and how his advice should be applied to live the best possible life.

In this Introduction, I will outline Seneca's exposure to philosophy, explaining his justification for adopting Stoicism as a 'cure' for passions, highlighting the Stoic doctrines he adopts and rejects, as well as considering how he relates to the views of other philosophical schools, such as the Aristotelians and Epicureans. I follow with a briefly outline of Seneca's and Stoic attitudes towards poetry in relation to its emotional impact on its audience before discussing his purpose in writing through discussing his use of philosophy in drama. I consider how he presents his ideas, which includes exploring his techniques, his use of rhetoric and declamation, as well as briefly considering the more common scholarly subjects of the controversies relating to the dating, authorship and performance of Seneca's plays. By exploring these subjects at this point, I will be able to establish how my research is placed within previous scholarship. The Introduction ends with a summary of the content of the texts to which I will refer and an outline of the arguments stated in each chapter.

Senecan philosophy

Seneca had contact with many philosophers, all of whom shaped his outlook in different ways.⁵ Stoicism is clearly Seneca's greatest interest as is demonstrated by the fact that in his prose works there are over eighty references to Zeno, Cleanthes, Chrysippus and the Middle Stoa, Panaetius and Posidonius, as well as sixty mentions of the School in general, in addition to ten minor Stoics.⁶ Stoicism was relevant to Seneca's era because it was a time when traditional values were challenged, freedom

⁵ Seneca's chief philosophical influence and teacher was Sotion of Alexandria (*Ep.* 49.2) inspired by Quintus Sextius the Elder (cf. *Ep.* 2.36; 3.36; 59.7-8; 64.2f.; 98.14; 108.17-8). Seneca was also taught by Papirius Fabianus (cf. *Brev. vit.* 10.1; *Ep.* 58,6; 98.13; *QNat.* 3.27.4; *Sen. Controv.* 2. Pref.) and Attalus (cf. *Ep.* 108.3, 13). Cf. Pratt (1983) pp. 38-9; Sellars (2014).

⁶ Cf. Motto (1970) pp. xiii-iv.

was precarious because of tyrants' rule and current social acknowledgements of status no longer met people's needs. Individuals responded by redefining the meaning of their life by looking inward, which is appropriate preparation for practising Stoicism.⁷

Stoicism is a practical philosophy which offers guidance for behaviour. The School expects individuals to relate the philosophical doctrines to their lives, rather than using them solely as abstract academic theory.⁸ True philosophy is not about eloquent or persuasive arguments, but is concerned with self-improvement because it teaches how to act as opposed to how to talk, in that it expects the internalisation and practical application of doctrines rather than merely intellectualising theory (*Ep.* 20.2).⁹ Stoics seek perfect reason (that is identical to God), which is achievable by understanding everything and *living virtuously in accordance with nature/secundum naturam*, that being the *art of living/techne peri ton bion/ars vivendi*, where virtue is interpreted as being excellence of character (Sext. *Emp. Math.* 11.170 (*SVF* 3.598)).¹⁰

The Stoic understanding of *secundum naturam* is two-fold.¹¹ Initially, individuals must live true to their personal nature, perfect wisdom with a

⁷ Cf. Segal (2008) pp. 136-7.

⁸ Cf. *Ep.* 16.2-3; 20.2ff.; 75.4; 108.36.

⁹ Cited in Hadot (1995, 2003) p. 110 n. 9.

¹⁰ Cf. Cic. *Acad.* 2.23; Plut. *De Stoic. rep.* 1034d; Stob. *Ecl.* 2.7.5b10.

¹¹ Diogenes Laertius revealed that there was a general consensus among Stoics that the good life and virtue depended on following nature by citing Zeno, Cleanthes, Posidonius, Hecato, Chrysippus, Diogenes and Archedemus as holding this view (Diog. Laert. 7.87-8). Zeno initially proposed that man should 'live in accordance' and Cleanthes expanded this to include 'with nature' referring to 'common' nature to which Chrysippus added individual nature (cf. Diog. Laert. 7.87-9; Stob. *Ecl.* 2.7.6a). Posidonius posed a greater challenge to the orthodox view by arguing that the existing Stoic definition of the 'end' was not satisfactory and this affected the viability of the arguments of what it meant to live in accordance with nature (Gal. *PHP* 5.6.6-12). He drew on Platonic theories of virtue and *telos* and went as far as to argue that all ethical philosophy doctrines are connected through the knowledge of the soul's powers which suggests that by understanding these men can live well because they will understand how to prevent passions from arising and heal them when they do (Gal. *PHP* 4.7.23-4). Hence why the addition of the irrational part of the soul is necessary for Posidonius to explain passions. He believed that once the nature of passions is fully comprehended, the errors in defining the end are removed because knowing this exposes the 'distortion' between what should be sought (or avoided), distinguishes the methods of training and clarifies the 'difficulties about the conation that arises from affection' (Gal. *PHP* 5.6.14). Seneca agrees with Posidonius with regard to the importance of comprehensive understanding of the world and its causes, as well as

complete understanding of the workings of the universe and utilising this knowledge to inform their actions. This is because Stoic philosophy is: ‘*the knowledge of things divine and things human — divinorum et humanorum scientiam*’ (Ep. 89.5).¹² This includes knowing the cause of everything (cf. Ep. 64.7-8)¹³ and genuine well-being/*summum bonum*, depends on this knowledge as this is what distinguishes good from evil (Ep. 74.29).¹⁴ Understanding nature facilitates an understanding of God and with acceptance of a wholly providential world comes a truer appreciation of perfect reason. From a Stoic perspective, men who follow perfect reason and live fully according to nature will want to live virtuously (i.e. without unnatural passions) because this is what they are designed to do.¹⁵ Seneca goes as far as to argue that nature provides all the resources needed to live well (Ep. 90.38) and philosophy affords true richness (Ep. 17). As a result, following nature leads to joy, as well as sustained and genuine happiness, and it enables man to fulfil his destined potential.¹⁶ Evidently, when measured against this criterion for nature, anger cannot be regarded natural: as an obstacle to exercising reason, it prevents the acquisition of the knowledge necessary to live in accordance with nature.¹⁷

Individuals are expected to perform ‘*appropriate actions/officia*’, that is those which are carried out in the right way for the right reasons in accordance with individual and universal nature and those which are directed by reason.¹⁸ Satisfaction accompanies focusing on doing a few things well and how to respond properly to situations. Perfected reason involves all actions

knowing personal strengths and weakness to achieve *tranquillitas* (cf. Gal. *PHP* 4.4.38, 5.6.23) but does not appear to have believed that this depends on accepting an irrational part of the soul as Posidonius did. Rather, he adopts the more developed orthodox view that living in accordance should be that of both nature in general and nature to men as individuals. Cf. Schofield (2003, 2006) pp. 242-6; Veyne (2003) pp. 41-6.

¹² Cf. Ep. 68.2; 90.3; Cic. *Off.* 2.25; Inwood (2005, 2008) pp. 167-8; Setaioli (2007) p. 334.

¹³ Cf. Cic. *Tusc.* 4.57.

¹⁴ Cf. Ep. 31.6; 88.28; *QNat.* 6.4.2; *Ot.* 5.6.

¹⁵ I will refer to man and men collectively representing humankind, acknowledging that Stoicism welcomes both sexes, including slaves and although Seneca’s works are largely addressed to men, he has expectations that women should follow philosophical ideals too cf. Ep. 44.2; 73.12-73.15; *Helv.* 17.3ff; Veyne (2003) pp. 137ff.

¹⁶ Cf. *Beat.* 3.3-4, 4.2; Ep. 23.4; 59.16; Sext. *Emp. Math.* 11.30.

¹⁷ For the question of the naturalness of anger, see pp. 102-7.

¹⁸ Cf. Diog. Laert. 7.107ff.; Stob. *Ecl.* 2.7ff., 2.11ff.; Gass (2000) p. 22; Veyne (2003) pp. 92-4.

being chosen on the basis of what is honourable (*Ep.* 76.18). Consequently, the individual should successfully carry out roles which fulfil their abilities and avoid tasks which highlight personal weaknesses, which is possible when he truly 'knows' himself. Problems arise when self is rigidly defined by socio-political roles because nature is an ever-changing process which requires appropriate adaption.

The second part of *secundum naturam* involves man's relationship with the universe, which is essentially rational (cf. Cic. *Fin.* 3.22). The highest good is conforming to nature's will by applying correct reason (cf. *Ep.* 66.39; *Ot.* 5.1) and following virtue (cf. *Beat.* 8.2). The greater good of mankind must be prioritised over personal gain, not only because this is the right thing to do, but also because it offers personal security and is an imitation of the gods.¹⁹ A Stoic does not begrudge personal sacrifices because he does not view such expectations as anything but correct and necessary to fulfil duties towards his fellowmen (2.5.2):²⁰ doing good is reward enough.²¹ These positive measures are not possible in anger in particular, which reinforces why, passions are unnatural and therefore must be extirpated.

As well as demonstrating virtue, having perfect reason offers protection against being governed by passions and their accompanying fluctuations of mind which thus enables appropriate selections of externals based on correct judgements about something's value.²² This knowledge facilitates a state of concord of the soul/*animi concordia*, the key to *summum bonum*,

¹⁹ Cf. *Clem.* 1.19.9; *Ep.* 48.11.

²⁰ Cf. *Ep.* 3.2; Stob. *Ecl.* 2.11f.

²¹ Cf. *Ben.* 4.1.3; *Ep.* 81.19; 113.31.

²² Zeno divided 'things' as 'good', 'bad' and 'indifferent' with the latter relating to life/death, reputation/ill-repute, pleasure/exertion, wealth/poverty, health/sickness (Stob. *Ecl.* 2.5a-o. Cf. Cic. *Fin.* 3.50-7; Diog. Laert. 7.94-105, 160; Stob. *Ecl.* 2.79.18-80.13; 82.20-1; 2.83.10-84.2 (SVF 3.124)). 'Indifferents' are further divided: those deemed valuable were 'preferred', those without value were 'dispreferred'; thus, life and health should be preferred and sought, even though they are not 'good' in themselves (Diog. Laert. 7.102. Cf. Plut. *De Stoic. rep.* 1048A; Sext. Emp. *Math.* 11.59-67; Stob. *Ecl.* 2.7.7a-b, 2.84.18-85.11 (SVF 3.128)). Indifferents are void of moral value but 'preferred indifferents' can have a physical value (food and good health are necessary to meet basic needs) or have emotional value (such as friendships and romantic connections) or intellectual value such as books and conversation (cf. *Ep.* 66.36ff.; 74.17ff.; 82.10ff.; 109.12-3). Cf. Schofield (2003, 2006) pp. 239-41; Veyne (2003) pp. 81-4.

which is synonymous with happiness and virtue because opinion, desire and action are in accord producing consistency of mind (cf. *Beat.* 8.5-6).²³ Hence, the most important thing is having the correct mental attitude so that once principles have been internalised, they can be practised.²⁴ Seneca and other Stoic sources use the traditional division of virtue into four cardinal virtues, wisdom, courage, justice and temperance.²⁵ To be wise is to have moral insight to examine each decision carefully, courage is to face adversity with the knowledge of dangers i.e. what is good and bad (cf. *Ben.* 2.34.3; *Ep.* 85.28), justice is to abide by and impose law, and temperance involves the ability to control oneself, an action which is within one's power.²⁶ Virtue as a whole is a 'harmonious disposition, choice-worthy for its own sake' rather than being born from either hope or fear of external influences and happiness arises from it because it is a state of mind that makes life harmonious (Chrysippus as reported in Diog. Laert. 7.89. Cf. Cic. *Tusc.* 4.34). Seneca agrees with his predecessor when he explains that virtue alone is '*sublime and exalted/sublimis et excelsa*' and such great things are at peace (1.21.4). Everything else is irrelevant to the good life.

Stoics believe in the unity of virtue in the sense that it is impossible to have one of the virtues without having all the others (cf. *Ep.* 86.2; 90.3)²⁷ and they hold that all evils are equal (Stob. *Ecl.* 2.11).²⁸ This reciprocal implication of the virtues can be explained by considering the cardinal virtues as being different forms and words for knowledge which encompasses right reason and is synonymous with virtue itself. Seneca explains that there are many aspects of virtue which are revealed at different points of life and by different

²³ Cf. Veyne (2003) pp. 33ff.

²⁴ Cf. Diog. Laert. 7.126; Stob. *Ecl.* 2.7.11k.

²⁵ Cf. Diog. Laert. 7.93; Sext. *Math.* 9.153; Stob. *Ecl.* 2.7.5b1-2. Cf. Gass (2000); Wildberger (2014). These characteristics were traditional in Greek thought from Plato onwards, who defines virtue as incorporating '*temperance/sophrosyne*', '*prudence/phronēsis*', '*courage/andreia*' and '*justice/dikaiosyne*' (Pl. *Resp.* 427eff.). Cf. Penner (1973).

²⁶ Cf. *Ep.* 67.41; 85.2; 88.29ff.; 95.55ff.

²⁷ Cf. Cic. *Tusc.* 3.26; Diog. Laert. 7.126; Stob. *Ecl.* 2.7.5, 2.63.6-24, 2.65.1-4; Plut. *De Stoic. rep.* 1046E-F.

²⁸ Cleanthes believed that virtue cannot be lost because it depends on knowledge which cannot be overruled: Chrysippus argued it can be lost because of intoxication or depression (Diog. Laert. 7.127-8). Cf. Diog. Laert. 7.105.

actions, but virtue itself never becomes lesser or greater because it cannot diminish or retrograde: it transforms into different qualities according to its required role (*Ep.* 66.7). The Stoic concept of virtue does not mean moral righteousness but having the psychological strengths or qualities of an ideal man, the Sage (cf. *Diog. Laert.* 7.121-5).²⁹ The Sage was as rare as a phoenix of Ethiopia (*Ep.* 42.1) and Chrysippus stated he never knew such a man (*Plut. De Stoic. rep.* 1048e).³⁰ While Seneca proposes that Cato was a Sage not even the greatest Stoics considered themselves to be so (cf. *Constant.* 2.2-2.3, 7.1). The rarity of the Sage reflects the difficulties of achieving this state but attempting to acquire such characteristics enables consistently correct action, thus the fulfilment of man's natural function and for this reason the dedication to the end goal is worthwhile.³¹

To place Stoic doctrines about passions in their theoretical context, it is necessary to consider their place in the structure of the School's theory. Traditionally, there are three branches of Stoic philosophy: logic, physics and ethics, which are not mutually exclusive but are intertwined (cf. *Ep.* 89.1-3).³² For example, Chrysippus' approach to the Stoic doctrine of passions is placed in the wider context of man's correct goal and his place as a rational animal in a rational universe.³³ The Roman Stoa is predominantly centred on ethics, which involves the use of logic and physics and how these relate to practical life, to provide an understanding of the true definition of nature, a comprehension of the doctrine of the good and indifferents, and learning about the concept of fair justice.³⁴ During the Roman Imperial period, the study of passions is discussed in greater detail, not only by Seneca but also by authors such as Musonius Rufus, Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius. This is because the contemporary ethical interest

²⁹ For the Sage's qualities, cf. *Cic. Fin.* 3.26, 75; *Cic. Parad. Stoic.* 33-52; *Cic. Rep.* 1.28; *Cic. Tusc.* 3.10-21; *Stob. Ecl.* 2.7.5-12.

³⁰ Cf. *Alex. Aphr. Fat.* 28.199.14-22 (*SVF* 3.658, part); *Sext. Emp. Math.* 9.133; Donini and Inwood (1999) p. 722; Veyne (2003) pp. 68-71; Graver (2007) p. 174.

³¹ Cf. Setaioli (2014b) pp. 243-4.

³² Cf. *Diog. Laert.* 7.39ff.; *Sext. Emp. Math.* 7.19. Cleanthes further divided logic and physics to produce six parts where logic was divided into dialectic and rhetoric, ethics into ethics proper and politics, physics into physics proper and theology (*Diog. Laert.* 7.41). Cf. Annas (2007) esp. pp. 58-63.

³³ As correctly observed by Inwood (1985) p. 155.

³⁴ Cf. Gill (2003, 2006) pp. 40-4; Reydam-Schils (2005) esp. pp. 3, 53-82.

expanded the earlier Greek emphasis on the goal of virtue. This involved extending the concept of virtue to include the attainment of '*tranquillity/tranquillitas*', that is, peace of mind with the ability to enjoy *constantiae*, be brave, wise, just and disciplined and replacing all negative passions with positive feelings (*constantiae*).³⁵

Agreeing with a Stoic goal, Seneca seeks *tranquillitas* because endurance results in the '*great prize/tantum praemium*' of '*the undisturbed tranquillity of a joyful mind — felicitis animi inmota tranquillitas*' (2.12.6).³⁶ With *tranquillitas* comes the freedom from the disturbance of *adfectus*, including anger and its accompanying ills (madness, ferocity, cruelty and rage) and the ability to respond appropriately to all challenges (2.12.6). When the mind is perfectly calm, it crushes everything that creates anger, it is controlled, commands respect and is correctly ordered (3.6.1). Seneca seeks to help man to achieve this state because this is what he should strive for and acquiring it fulfils his human potential of becoming wholly rational. These developments can be regarded as attempts to make the philosophical doctrines more widely appealing, even to those who did not consider themselves to be philosophers. Seneca discusses relevant topics in a convincing and accessible way, such as through the use of *exempla* of which his Roman contemporaries would be familiar, especially from their declamatory training and he employs rhetorical questions to provoke thinking in his readers.³⁷

Seneca's decision to adopt Stoic principles

Seneca continues the process of humanising Stoicism, focusing predominantly on the ethical strand. His ill-health, as well as his exile, makes Seneca particularly sympathetic to the human cause and aware of the need to make the best of all circumstances.³⁸ His interest was a

³⁵ For *constantiae*, see pp. 84-5.

³⁶ Cf. *Ep.* 75.17-8; *Cic. Tusc.* 3.25.

³⁷ Cf. Roller (2004); Mayer (2008); Seal (2015) pp. 221-2. For Seneca's rhetorical techniques, see pp. 22, 41-7, 118-9, 156-7, 168-70.

³⁸ Seneca's ill-health led him to spend his early years in the warmer climate of Egypt under the guardianship of his aunt. Cf. *Ep.* 78.1-4; *Helv.* 19.2; Griffin (1976, 1992) p. 42; Wilson (2014) pp. 61-3; Braund (2015) p. 25; Gunderson (2015) pp. 100-3. For Seneca's views

consequence of his environment and social trends, as he experienced the problems of passions in emperors and those with political power on their citizens, slaves and neighbours.³⁹ He believes that these vices are the root of human problems on account of the fact that they disrupt man's ability to act according to reason (which should be the governing principle) and by understanding passions men are in a stronger position to prevent them.⁴⁰ In this respect, he follows Posidonius who stated that examining good, evil, ends and virtues depends on examining affections (Posidonius *On the Affections* 1 *apud* Gal. *PHP* 5.6.2) and that the most healthy and sound movements in the mind follow judgment (3.35.2).⁴¹ Recognising the problems of human error, Seneca wishes men to live virtuously and he is hopeful that the obstacles to living this way can be met by moderating attitudes and behaviours.⁴² He presents himself as turning to Stoicism because the School holds that few vices are beyond cure, anger can be excised (*excidi*) because sicknesses can be cured '*sanabilibus aegrotamus malis*' (2.13.1) and these can be replaced with virtue because discipline can tame even the wildest vices, such as anger (2.12.3).⁴³

about ill-health and the endurance of suffering, see *Ep.* 67. Seneca was first exiled to barren Corsica in 41AD by the angered Emperor Claudius on the instigation of his third wife Messalina on a charge of adultery with Caligula's sister Julia Livilla. He was recalled to Rome in 49AD at the request of Claudius' fourth wife Agrippina the Younger to tutor her son Nero. After the death of Burrus in 62AD Seneca retired outside Rome where he spent his final three years devoted to study (cf. Tac. *Ann.* 14.56). Cf. Kamp (1934) pp. 101-8; Gahan (1985) pp. 145-7; Wilson (2014) pp. 82ff.

³⁹ Konstan (2015) correctly notes how the socio-political situation in Seneca's lifetime inspired him to write *De Clementia* to advise Emperor Nero about the importance of clemency (p. 174).

⁴⁰ Cf. 2.7.1-3, 2.8.1-3, 2.9.1-4, 2.10.1-5, 2.31.8, 2.36.4, 3.26.3-5; *Beat.* 1.4; *Ben.* 1.10.1-4, 7.26.3-5, 7.27.1-3; *Brev.* 2.3, 12.8; *Ep.* 7.1-7; 32.2; 75.15; 94.53-54; 95.23-24, 29, 33-34; 97.1-11; 99.13; *Clem.* 1.6.3, 1.26.1-4; *Poly.* 13.1; *QNat.* 1.17.10, 5.15.2, 7.31.2-3, 7.32.1-3, 4. Prol. 2; Tarrant (2006) pp. 5-8.

⁴¹ I accept the argument that Posidonius' discovery of the 'root' of bad in mankind inspired his work and that he situates it at the heart of the theory of passions and at the centre of ethics (Fillion-Lahille (1984) p. 154). For the influence of Posidonius on Seneca, see pp. 60-1, 74-7, 105-6, 137.

⁴² Cf. 1.28, 1.31.5, 3.26.3; Cooper (2004) pp. 309-34.

⁴³ Pratt (1983) recognises the importance of Stoicism for Seneca's therapy: 'Seneca's Neo-Stoicism shows the mind and heart of a man who despairs about the moral problems of human life in general and of his time in particular, including his own. But his energy and vehemence// are too characteristic of him to be only negative. The depth of his distress is matched by the height of his aspiration to such an extent that he stretches his chosen philosophy to a new dimension of religious feeling' (pp. 71-2).

Seneca claims that humans are blessed by the power of discernment to overcome vice and that passions, such as *ira*, are removable (2.12.1ff. Cf. 3.8.7). What he presents as a personal opinion has a Stoic flavour in the optimism it has for the use of innate reason for humans to conquer the difficulties which arise from passions, including anger and the expectation that humans would want to persist in doing this, not only for personal benefit but because it is the right thing to do because it accords with nature.⁴⁴ The human intellect is powerful enough to conquer anything through persistent study (*adsidua meditatio*) and the will to want to change because humans are intrinsically rational beings, it is within their capabilities to change the way they think and act and passions are not so wild or independent (*sui iuris*) that discipline cannot conquer and tame them (*vincat, perdomentur*) (2.12.3). The mind obtains what it commands of itself (*quodcumque sibi imperavit animus obtinuit*) demonstrating the strength of the *anima* to control action and thus man's responsibility to care for it properly (2.12.4. Cf. 2.13.1). Seneca uses the metaphor of straightening spear shafts with fire, to show how physical pain to the body and mental distress may be applied to reform those whose natures are distorted by vice (1.6.1).

Seneca voices a Stoic view that moral progress is possible even among those who practise the worst vices (1.6.1).⁴⁵ Character transformation is possible through appropriate re-education, where lessons are internalised and applied, not merely intellectualised, to benefit from philosophy and to be able to live well.⁴⁶ Changes can occur when the difference between good and bad things is assimilated and correct judgements are consequently made in relation to appropriate selection and avoidance of externals.⁴⁷ Remembering that 'badness' is due to ignorance about the true value of 'things' and the misunderstanding of what will be of benefit rather than

⁴⁴ For *secundum naturam*, see pp. 12-4.

⁴⁵ Cf. *Ben.* 7.19.5; *Ep.* 123.16; *Cic. Tusc.* 4.80. See Motto (1973) p. 50. Braund (2009) asserts that Seneca's philosophical treatises 'tackle the individual's relationship with the world from a Stoic perspective' (p. 21).

⁴⁶ Cf. *Ep.* 16.2-3; 20.2ff.; 75.4; 108.36.

⁴⁷ For Zeno's division of 'Things', see *Stob. Ecl.* 2.5f. on p. 14 n. 22.

harmful intent, contributes to understanding other people's behaviour. In this respect, Stoicism's wide accessibility aids the removal of social injustice. Acquiring virtue is demanding and is a life-long journey of progression (cf. *Ep.* 27.4) and an individual in this state is termed the one who is advancing, *progressor/prokoptōn/proficiens* (cf. Plut. *Comm. not.* 1063a (SVF 3.539)). The state of mind of a student progressing who is well-established in his perfecting reason was often discussed by Posidonius.⁴⁸ Seneca clarifies the nature of progression by dividing it into three stages, defined according to an individual's susceptibility to passions (cf. *Ep.* 75).⁴⁹ In the initial stage, he can avoid most, but not all, of the passions. He is shielded from the worst vices but will still experience some *adfectus* (*Ep.* 75.14).⁵⁰ During the middle stage, the *proficiens* is released from the most serious diseases and can reject the greatest evils but is not entirely free from passions because he may relapse into experiencing them (*Ep.* 75.13-4). Seneca explains how, at the highest level (where the progressor is closest to the Sage defined by his cognitive and moral perfection), he is no longer controlled by bad habits. This is because he has overcome the influence of *adfectus* but is not always able to withstand them and therefore has not yet achieved complete virtue. At this stage, the individual is protected from the 'disease/*morbis*' of passions though he still feels them (cf. *Ep.* 75.12).⁵¹

Becoming virtuous requires both commitment and guidance through doctrines, *precepts/praecepta* and consolations presented in lectures, discussions, texts, letters and drama (*Ep.* 95.34. Cf. *Ep.* 94). Many Stoics believe that virtue can be taught, consequently, written texts are an important part of Stoic education (Diog. Laert. 7.91).⁵² Seneca takes the role of an author as a moral advisor seriously and uses his writing, including his

⁴⁸ Cf. Gal. *PHP* 4.5.28, 7.6, 5.2.29, 6.28.

⁴⁹ Cf. Veyne (2003) pp. 109-10.

⁵⁰ Cf. *Ep.* 71.30ff.; 72.6ff.; 109.15. Currie (1972) argues that Seneca's idea of the *proficiens* and stages of progression replaced the idea that being imperfect was the equivalent to moral depravity: '...where the early Stoics had laid down absolute moral imperatives, Seneca shows a more human and understanding spirit' (p. 33). Cf. Wray (2015) pp. 202-6.

⁵¹ Cicero noted how great thinkers who are not yet wise remain afflicted by evils but do not grieve over this (Cic. *Tusc.* 3.68).

⁵² Cf. *Ep.* 2; 33; 39; 45.1; 84; 89.48; Setaioli (2014b) pp. 253-5.

tragedies, to inform his readers and audience about virtue and vice.⁵³ In *De Ira*, he offers reassurance that it is easy to live the best human life (2.13.2) and he encourages his brother, Novatus, to pursue it with the backing of good auspices and assistance from the gods (2.13.2). Life without virtue is harder particularly because nothing is more relaxed than *clementia* and busier than cruelty (2.13.2). Seneca assumes that everyone would automatically want to practise Stoicism as he has personally reaped the benefits of its '*transformation/transfigurari*' because, now that he is aware of his faults, he is in a stronger position to correct them (*Ep.* 6.1).⁵⁴ Seneca's presentation of the problems which passions cause, inspires self-improvement in his reader/audience in those who wish to live a better life.

To avoid pursuing desires and being subject to other passions, which may cause a distraction from overall good, Seneca advises following *doctrines/decreta* or moral principles based on true 'good' (*Ep.* 94.9ff.).⁵⁵ These offer guidance in selecting 'things' correctly according to their true value and what should be pursued or avoided. Taking this approach will minimise the risk of the decline into passions because it involves understanding how externals really impact upon an individual's well-being. These fundamental principles should be kept at the forefront of the mind, or *at hand/procheiron/statim... praesto* so that they can easily be recalled and appropriately applied when the need arises so that reason governs rather than being diverted by passions.⁵⁶ Man is influenced by laws and precepts for advice about his behaviour.⁵⁷ The former motivates by fear of committing crime: the latter are rules and recommendations on behaviour relevant to individuals, or a group of people in the form of injunction and prohibitions. Cleanthes is reported to have believed that precepts are useful only when they are used alongside knowledge of the dogmas (*Ep.* 94.3). They correct

⁵³ Cf. Seal (2015) pp. 216-21.

⁵⁴ See Hadot (1995, 2003) who argues that: 'It raises the individual from an inauthentic condition of life, darkened by unconsciousness and harassed by worry, to an authentic state of life, in which he attains self-consciousness, an exact vision of the world, inner peace, and freedom' (p. 83). Cf. Motto (1956) pp. 275-8; Edwards (2008).

⁵⁵ Cf. Kidd (1978) pp. 251-5; Mitsis (1986) and (1993) pp. 285-312; Inwood (1988).

⁵⁶ Cf. *Ben.* 7.2.1; *Ep.* 24.26; *Xen. Mem.* 1.21.

⁵⁷ Cf. Inwood (2005, 2008) pp. 95-131.

men by *'pleading/exorant'* and assist learning good from evil, judgements about which are reinforced by fulfilling duties because they organise good conduct relating to moral obligation (*Ep.* 94.34). Seneca advises that souls are granted the tranquillity provided by constant meditation on wholesome instruction, by noble deeds and a mind focused solely on seeking what is honourable (3.41.1) and by doing so the mind would be trained to move away from being drawn into passions. By taking these simple steps and integrating them into his life, man is assured of a sustained and genuine life of happiness, free from the binds of passions.

Seneca is dedicated to removing his faults and living a complete life (*Ep.* 61.1). By adopting a Stoic perspective and taking practical measures to implement philosophical doctrines, Seneca is concerned with replacing human vices, such as anger, by focusing on the philosophical goal of perfecting reason and achieving *tranquillitas*. He presents himself as making good progress towards perfecting reason.⁵⁸ This demonstrates how, through dedication to self-improvement, everyone can work towards becoming virtuous.⁵⁹ He humbly asserts that he is not a Stoic Sage but a *proficiens* trying to improve himself and his fellow struggler/patient.⁶⁰ Seneca sees himself as a guide to lost travellers (*Ep.* 8.3). He recognises the need for a moral escort to help people acquire virtue.⁶¹ This is because of the difficulties of obtaining it without assistance compared with vice which is learnt without guidance (*QNat.* 3.30.8). He identifies two types of guide (*Ep.* 52.7-8): previous thinkers who assist through their texts (cf. *Brev.* 14) and recent Roman thinkers, such as lecturers and wise men, for instance, Cato, Laelius and Tubero (*Ep.* 104.21-2).⁶²

⁵⁸ Cf. *Beat.* 17.3-4; *Ep.* 6.1, 3; 8.1-2; 27.1; 45.4; 57.3; 68.8-9; 71.30-3, 36-7; 87.4-5.

⁵⁹ Bartsch (2015) sensibly recognises that in Seneca: 'We see an intellectual agent engaged in a constant struggle for self-amelioration; a self that practices a series of exercises, meditations, and second-order self-examinations in a constant and unabated effort toward a perfect serenity that we never see it gaining in any permanent way – even if Seneca speaks of individual wise decisions or knows theoretically what must be done' (p. 188).

⁶⁰ Cf. *Ep.* 27.1-3; *Helv.* 5.2.

⁶¹ Cf. *Beat.* 1.2; *Ben.* 5.25.5-6; *Ep.* 52.2; 94.50-6.

⁶² Cf. *Ep.* 95.72; *QNat.* 6.5.2-3; Hine (2006) pp. 57-8. For the good examples of Fabricius, Tubero and Sextius the elder (*Ep.* 98.13). Seneca also respects the opinions of Marcus

Seneca is not a professional teacher but is an important source about what philosophical education involves which is particularly important when he is encouraging his readers and audience to overcome passions. He writes about the application of Stoicism, not just technically or as contributing to theoretical debate, and presents the theory and *praecepta* as directions about how to act, which is how his writing seeks to educate in living well (*Ep.* 16.3). He explicitly states that God gave man life, with the capacity to acquire knowledge and '*living well is the gift of philosophy — munus ...philosophiae quod bene vivimus*' (*Ep.* 90.1).⁶³ He recognises the benefits that derive from intimate letter-writing but promotes discussions inspired by lectures (*Ep.* 38.1. Cf. *Ep.* 6.5), demonstrating how Stoicism is not a solitary experience (1.5.2).⁶⁴ Philosophy requires close interaction with suitable people who have the shared concern for self-improvement to achieve complete success in pursuing Stoic goals such as virtuous living.

In a continuation of the theme of guidance in moral pursuit, Seneca elsewhere describes himself as a doctor, which is reminiscent of Chrysippus' argument that the philosopher is a physician of the soul (Gal. *PHP* 5.2.22-8). Seneca believes that: '*I've been recruited to heal the community — ciuitati curandae adhibitus sum*' (1.16.4) because he promotes healthy attitudes to replace vices.⁶⁵ He has dedicated himself to this task to assist his contemporaries and future generations (*Ep.* 8.2). This may justify why he does not always follow the orthodox opinions of early Stoics but selects elements from the School's doctrines and contributes to the development of philosophical theory by introducing modifications to traditional perspectives and incorporating innovations: he is successful in this goal as his writings still capture modern interest.⁶⁶

Cato, the Elder and the Younger, Laelius the Wise, Socrates and Plato, Zeno and Cleanthes (*Ep.* 64.10).

⁶³ Indeed, philosophy alone corrects error (*Ep.* 53.8) and is mutually dependent on virtue (*Ep.* 89.8).

⁶⁴ Cf. *Clem.* 2.5; *Ep.* 48.2-3; 95.52; Cic. *Fin.* 3.62-70.

⁶⁵ Motto (1955b).

⁶⁶ Cf. *Helv.* 1.2, 2.1f.; *Marc.* 1.8. For Seneca's orthodoxy, see Chapter One *passim*.

Seneca was criticised in his time, and often by modern scholars, for his perceived hypocrisy: he promotes simple living at the same time as holding an authoritative position of high status with financial security.⁶⁷ It is well-documented that Seneca was an extremely wealthy man.⁶⁸ However, Tacitus reported Seneca's simplicity, particularly his diet later in his life, and his will requested a simple funeral (cf. *Tac. Ann.* 15.45, 63, 64). Seneca makes it very clear that wealth is not only unnecessary for a virtuous life: instead, it can cause unhappiness when it is craved for (cf. *Ep.* 2.6; 14.18; 80.4ff.) because it is only temporary (cf. *Beat.* 17.2). The proper limit to wealth is: '*to have what is necessary... and what is enough — habere quod necesse est... quod sat est*' (*Ep.* 2.6). Humans only need what is sufficient to meet their basic requirements of food and shelter (cf. *Ep.* 4.10-1), even though this conflicts with what people conventionally desire and preparation for misfortune prevents (mistaken) feelings of suffering.⁶⁹ Seneca never boasts about being wise nor does he claim to be a Sage. His choice to dedicate his life to philosophy and to live by its principles surely absolves Seneca from accusations of hypocrisy. He is proving that whatever an individual's financial situation, he remains able to improve himself and that this is necessary regardless of his status. Seneca is not complacent about his lot but is accepting of the fact that his current good fortune can and will change (as was proved by his exile). This knowledge has prepared him to deal with all eventualities without becoming distressed.

Seneca the philosopher of many schools

Establishing Seneca's orthodoxy is necessary when considering the extent to which he can be considered a Stoic, an innovator, or eclectic.⁷⁰ This impacts on how his attitudes towards and contribution to the theory of passions affects how he believes *adfectus* should be tackled. It is necessary to establish his beliefs, and where possible their origins, when considering his selection of theories and the effectiveness of the approaches he

⁶⁷ Cf. Motto (1984) pp. 230-1; Griffin (1974, repr. 2008) pp. 54-8 (page references to 2008 edition).

⁶⁸ Cf. Dio Cass. 61.10, 62.2, 25; *Juv. Sat.* 10, 16; *Suet. Ner.* 35; *Tac. Ann.* 13.42, 14.52-53, 56, 15.64; Wedeck (1955); Wilson (2014) pp. 127-41.

⁶⁹ Cf. *Ep.* 5.2, 5.6; 115.11.

⁷⁰ Cf. Gill (2003, 2006) pp. 45-50.

proposes to manage anger. Analysis of Seneca's place within Stoic thought is constrained to a certain degree by the comparatively limited extant writings of the early Stoa, particularly in their original forms, and allowances must be made for the intentions and bias of the authors who report them.⁷¹ I will identify where Seneca agrees with the early Stoic doctrines with a view to establishing his place in the Stoic tradition, considering how he was influenced by thinkers such as Posidonius and the features of his thought that come from other philosophical schools such as Epicureanism and middle Platonism. This will assist in determining the extent to which he can be considered to be Stoic and to demonstrate areas of development and innovation in philosophical doctrines. This discussion will continue in Chapter One.

Seneca is orthodox in his belief that the *summum bonum* consists in virtue in the sense of following nature and her laws, not depending on fate or externals, making correct selections and deselections of things nor being saddened when they are lost.⁷² Seneca confirms that '*the Stoic also can carry his goods unimpaired through cities that have been burned to ashes; for he is self-sufficient. Such are the bounds which he sets to his own happiness. — Aeque et hic intacta bona per concrematas urbes fert. Se enim ipso contentus est. Hoc felicitatem suam fine designat*' (*Ep.* 9.19). This is significant when considering his attitudes towards a cause of anger which arises from the desire for or loss of objects and people as well as underlying his belief that humans should strive to seek *tranquillitas*, thinking which has Stoic origins. He remains concerned with the distinctions between good and evil and virtue and vice and many of his works centre on this subject: indeed, Quintilian praised him for his interest in the subject (*Quint. Inst.* 10.1.129). Seneca recognises the importance of contemplation⁷³ and promotes the balance between public and private life with the focus on improving self and other people⁷⁴ and the fact the Sage is involved in politics unless something

⁷¹ Cf. Graver (2014) pp. 257-8.

⁷² Cf. *Beat.* 3.3, 4.2, 8.2, 21.2, 23.4, 26.3. For Seneca's advice on externals, see pp. 141-3, 158-9.

⁷³ Cf. *Ep.* 94.45, *Ot.* 6.2; *Cic. Fin.* 2.41.

⁷⁴ Cf. *Ep.* 8.2; *Ot.* 3.5, 4.2, 6.5; *Tranq.* 1.10, 3.1, 3.3, 4.1, 4.8, 13.1, 17.3.

prevents him (cf. *Ot.* 3.2).⁷⁵ When opposing the Peripatetic and Epicurean views of passions, for instance in relation to the naturalness, moderation and usefulness of passions, Seneca adopts a Stoic position.⁷⁶ By Seneca's era, there was a shift in the School's focus and one that he embraces, which demonstrates how he still respected the old Stoa but agreed with the need to change its doctrines to accord with contemporary requirements. For instance, while man's *end/telos/finis* remains seeking the *summum bonum* through attaining virtue, there was increasing focus on the importance of seeking *tranquillitas*, which Seneca repeatedly affirms (cf. 2.12.6, 3.6.1).⁷⁷

Seneca openly censures Stoicism when he disagrees with its principles.⁷⁸ His greatest criticism is of Stoic logic, which he argues is not helpful if it is too abstract because it does not help self-improvement.⁷⁹ He also rejects Zeno's Stoic syllogisms because he believes that reflection is more important than just rote learning as well as criticising Stoic epistemology.⁸⁰ Seneca's attitude may have been influenced by his Sextii tutors whose school similarly disapproved of these disciplines. He recalls Fabianus' advice to fight passions with main force as opposed to cunning devices and sophistry ('*contra adfectus impetu non subtilitate pugnandum*') because

⁷⁵ Cf. Diog. Laert. 7.121; Cic. *Off.* 1.15-7. Abstention from public life to focus on spiritual improvement is often found in the philosophical recommendations of Epicureanism (cf. Lucr. 3.995-1002) and the Cynics (cf. Diog. Laert. 6.29).

⁷⁶ For debates about the naturalness of passions, see pp. 102-7, for the moderation of passions, see pp. 107-8 and for their usefulness, see pp. 112-20.

⁷⁷ Cf. Cic. *Tusc.* 3.25.

⁷⁸ Cf. *Ep.* 71.6; 87; 102.5; 102.20; Asmis (2015) p. 226.

⁷⁹ Cf. *Brev.* 13; *Ep.* 45.4; 48.4-12; 49.6-12; 82.9, 19; 83.9-17; 85.1-2, 24, 50; 88.32-45; 106; 109.17-8; 111; 113; 117; Nussbaum (1994) pp. 350-1. Seneca often disagrees with Stoics' physical doctrines, to the point he dismisses some of their ideas as being 'foolish', cf. *QNat.* 1.8.4, 4B5-4B6, 7.22.1; Asmis (2015) p. 227 n. 15, n. 16, n. 17.

⁸⁰ Cf. *Ep.* 111; 82.20-2; 83.9ff.; 85; 87.11. Williams (2015) argues that: 'In this energized spirit, the Senecan persona frequently disparages the drier subtleties of Stoic dialectical argumentation on the one hand (e.g., *Ep.* 45.8-13, 48.4-12, 71.6, etc.), the rhetorical indulgence of words for words' sake on the other (e.g., *Ep.* 40.13, 75.7, 100.2, etc.): through such gestures Seneca continually reaffirms the need for philosophy to dig deep, to engage with substance (*res*) rather than just words (*verba*), to form rather than merely inform' (p. 136). Cf. Hadot (1995, 2003) p. 64. Cicero similarly criticised the ineffectiveness of Stoic syllogisms which affected people as '*mere pinpricks/quasi aculeis*' without changing their minds (Cic. *Fin.* 4.7) cf. Cic. *Tusc.* 3.22; Manning (1987) p. 20; Cooper (2004) p. 314-20.

their nature was such that it required being crushed not nipped (*'nam contundi debere, non vellicari'* *Brev.* 10.1).⁸¹

To illustrate and justify his selectivity of Stoic theory, Seneca employs ruler metaphors to show man's independence of opinion (*Ep.* 113.23).⁸² He claims that Stoics choose freedom from a king in their thinking (*Ep.* 33.4). He encourages taking a personal path (*Ep.* 80.1 Cf. *Ot.* 1.5) and not blindly following one man or the inflexible rules of Zeno and Chrysippus (*Ot.* 3.1. Cf. *Beat.* 3.2-3).⁸³ Seneca will be guided by his predecessors but will not tie himself to a particular Stoic, claiming to have no particular master (*Ep.* 45.4) but will exercise his *'right to form his own opinion/censendi ius'* (*Beat.* 3.2). The assurance of freedom of thought, while promoting a School's doctrines, makes Seneca's philosophy appealing because choosing which parts of the theory to adopt enables individuals to tailor their influences to their specific needs. He is empowering the individual to rigorously reason their way through the ethical tangles in front of them, thus meaning that even if Seneca does not say what Zeno said, he is still a good Stoic if he has reached his position according to Stoic principles. Seneca is also innovative in his contribution to Stoic theory and is seeking to improve the philosophical tradition, by making it *'greater/ampliora'* (*Ep.* 64.7. Cf. *Ep.* 79.6).⁸⁴ He is receptive to developments in theory and welcomes new ideas, claiming that revisions need to be made to orthodox Stoicism (*Ep.* 64.7-9), with fresh ideas being introduced (*Ep.* 84.5), particularly because they are always new things to learn.⁸⁵ He recognises that if earlier views are accepted without being questioned, progress is not made in thinking because investigation would have ceased (*Ep.* 33.10).

Seneca likens the mission of developing existing theories and learning from other people to making honey, where bees carefully have to collect the right

⁸¹ Translated by Basore (1932, 1951) p. 317. Manning (1987) claims that the Sextii 'had no time for the linguistic quibbling and verbal logic chopping most notably associated with the Stoics' (p. 19).

⁸² Cf. *Brev.* 14.2, 5; *Ep.* 64.10.

⁸³ Cf. *Ep.* 21.9; 45.4; *Ot.* 3.1; *Cic. Tusc.* 4.7.

⁸⁴ Cf. Motto (1984).

⁸⁵ Cf. *QNat.* 6.5.3, 7.25.3-5, 30.5.

materials, digest them and make them their own (*Ep.* 84.3-7).⁸⁶ Using a travelling metaphor, Seneca reveals that he will seek shorter, smoother new routes if they prove better and believes that his predecessors are guides as opposed to masters, that truths are available to everyone and such discoveries are an infinite task (*Ep.* 33.11).⁸⁷ Seneca's attitudes towards progressing thinking shows how he sees himself as a thinker working within a flexible and receptive tradition that allows for development and growth rather than simply repetitive criticisms against a fixed set of doctrines. Arguably Seneca's greatest advancement of Stoic theory is found in his views about the formation of passions, which will be discussed in Chapter One.

My research focuses on Seneca's presentation of Stoicism and allusions to other philosophical schools are restricted to their references to anger management and comparison with Stoic psychological ideals. However, I acknowledge that other philosophers play an important role in moulding Seneca's views as is demonstrated by his diverse advice about how to pursue knowledge and truth, it is these varied influences that make him universally appealing to a wider audience. He fuses Epicureanism with his interest in Stoicism,⁸⁸ at the same time as refuting those philosophers with whom he disagrees.⁸⁹ By discussing alternative philosophical views, he shows his awareness of and openness to them as well as using them to place his arguments within the philosophical environment. Seneca's selection of philosophical ideas from his reading are used to promote his personal interests and goals: he is a 'scout/explorer', not a

⁸⁶ Cf. Asmis (2015) p. 228.

⁸⁷ For Seneca's encouragement of freedom in thinking, see *Ep.* 33.7ff. where maxims should be created by the individual and the purpose of philosophical texts is to support independent thought, not to automatically accept other people's views. Cf. Currie (1972) p. 33.

⁸⁸ Cf. *Beat.* 3.2; *Constant.* 3.1; *Ep.* 21.9; 45.4.

⁸⁹ Cf. Motto and Clark (1968) pp. 37-42; Motto (1970) pp. x- xxiii; Inwood (2005, 2008) pp. 14-8; Schiesaro (2015) pp. 239-51. As Tsouna (2011) recognises: 'The philosophical production of these centuries is characterized by eclecticism (i.e., a willingness to draw selectively from various traditions whatever elements seem best suited to one's purposes) and by syncretism (i.e., a tendency towards the fusion of diverse elements into new, distinct philosophical systems). Both syncretism and eclecticism are arguably to be found in Philodemus' Epicureanism, Seneca's Stoicism and Plutarch's various endeavours, Platonic and otherwise' (p. 183).

'deserter/transfuga', who 'crosses into the enemy's camp/in aliena castra transire' when he believes this to be beneficial for furthering thinking (*Ep.* 2.5-6). Seneca believes that considering the views of other thinkers leads to more questions, which is what constitutes a good life.⁹⁰ Challenging existing views is part of furthering knowledge and practising virtue/reason. This may explain his interest in Stoicism as a developing School which historically had individuals contributing to the theory, such as Panaetius and Posidonius who proposed amendments to Zeno and Chrysippus' doctrines.

Seneca, Stoicism and poetry

Some Stoics believe poetry can serve moral purposes when it satisfies the intellectual curiosity of the well-educated and instructs the upper-class in political involvement.⁹¹ Horace explained how poets seek to provide pleasure as well as offering precepts for life (*Hor. Ars P.* lines 333-44). Seneca follows this idea in his aim to educate his audience in virtue and vice to facilitate revisions in their world view, thus making drama as much an instance of ethical instruction as epic works (cf. *Ep.* 88.5-8; 108).⁹² He believes in the superiority of verse over prose for philosophical messages and quotes Cleanthes, who claimed that breath is louder through a trumpet which widens at the end in the same way that: "*the fettering rules of poetry clarify our meaning —sensus nostros clariores carminis arta necessitas efficit*" (*Ep.* 108.10. Cf. *Ep.* 108.7-11).⁹³

Seneca criticises poetry when its subject matter does not communicate a philosophical or moral purpose which infers the importance of having sound teachers who understand the importance of balancing education in literature

⁹⁰ Cf. *Brev.* 3.2; *Ep.* 5.4; 45.4; 80.1.

⁹¹ Cf. Strabo 1.2.8 where pleasant *mythos* leads to an impulse amongst the audience to good behaviour. However, there are reservations among Stoics about the dangers poetry can cause in producing pleasure from the harmonious sounds of the words '... a passion that has to be accounted for, justified and contained...' and that the reader might adopt 'morally objectionable ideas' (Schiesaro (2003) p. 229). Plutarch also expressed concern about sympathetic passions and the moral ideas which poetry can present (*Plut. Mor.* 16D-E. Cf. Schiesaro (2003) p. 230). Seneca is critical of poetry which promotes the value of wealth as the only credit and glory for man (*Ep.* 115.12ff.). He would not want tragedies to inspire the strong emotional responses which Aristotle insists they do in his definition of the genre (*Arist. Poet.* 1449b24-8). Cf. *Pl. Resp.* 376e-403c, 595a-612b.

⁹² Cf. De Lacy (1948) pp. 264-6; Pratt (1983) p. 73; Henry and Henry (1985) p. 96.

⁹³ Cf. Staley (2010) pp. 89-92; Gunderson (2015) pp. 22-3.

with learning controlled responses.⁹⁴ For example, Seneca attacks Vergil because of his unscientific poetry such as his poor physics relating to the wind (*QNat.* 6.18.4-5. Cf. *Ver. Aen* 1.53-4) – or when verse encourages incorrect or irresponsible opinions, such as when other poets blame the gods for human problems (*Brev.* 16.5) and he rejects the romanticism and inaccuracy of the underworld (*Marc.* 19.4).⁹⁵ Seneca offers an alternative view in which man takes control without reliance on divinities other than the inherent part of God in man. This view is both therapeutic and empowering for his contemporary audience who lived in a violent and challenging era where autonomy was compromised by the need to abide by aggressive emperors' whims.⁹⁶ It also commands greater accountability which depends on following reason not passion. This is true of his tragedies as the theatre facilitates detached consideration of human conduct because it arouses judgements and reflections on views and behaviours. Seneca explains that poetry and other arts create pre-passions, not *adfectus*, as people feel physiological responses to what they see and read (2.2.3-3.1) which provokes '*confession of truth/confessionem veritatis*' about the self (*Ep.* 108.8).⁹⁷ These considerations are relevant when considering the extent to which feelings can be controlled to prevent them from developing into full-blown passions and illustrate the importance of identifying pre-passions when they first arise.

Seneca's use of philosophy in drama

Seneca does not use drama in the same way as his prose solely to promote Stoicism, as some scholars argue.⁹⁸ Instead, the inclusion of philosophy is

⁹⁴ Cf. Batinski (1993); Schiesaro (1997) pp. 100-1.

⁹⁵ Cf. Maguinness (1956) pp. 87-8; Nussbaum (1994) p. 352. For Seneca's ambivalence to poetry, see *Beat.* 2.2, 26.6; *Ben.* 1.3.10, 1.4.5; *Tranq.* 17.11; Schiesaro (2003) pp. 24-5.

⁹⁶ Pratt (1983) argues that: 'Senecan drama is a contemporary form for it fuses Stoic psychology and ethics with Roman pathos and the preparedness for death characteristic of Seneca's century' (p. 78). For further discussion about Stoicism as a saviour from helplessness due to social and political constraints, see Calder III (1976) p. 9; Henry and Henry (1985) p. 73; Staley (2010) pp. 124-5.

⁹⁷ For Seneca's advancement of pre-passions, see pp. 60-2. Cf. Sorabji (2007a) pp. 169-70.

⁹⁸ Cf. Marti (1945); Davis (1993) pp. 125-6; Staley (2010) pp. 26-9; Chaumartin (2014) pp. 657-69. Curley (1986) believes that Seneca's nine tragedies were a 'desire' to inculcate Stoic precepts (p. 19); Rosenmeyer (1989) argues that Seneca had Stoic goals in the play (p. x).

for stylistic and dramatic purposes, with moral lessons to encourage self-improvement as a secondary, yet significant objective and one on which I will focus. Seneca uses philosophy in his dramas to make compelling statements about the world in which he lived and about the general human condition relating to determinism, cyclical evil, the fragility of institutions, failure of reason, the moral contraction of perceived civilisation and suffering.⁹⁹ There are, however, important similarities in the moralising prose and dramatic works, with both focusing on the individual's personal nature and struggle with challenging situations usually because of passions.¹⁰⁰ He states clearly that *De Ira's* intention is to advise Novatus how to soothe (1.1.1), remove or curb anger (3.1.1) and *De Clementia's* primary focus is to advise the new emperor Nero how he should rule (cf. *Clem.* 1.1.1, 1.5.7, 1.14) by comparing a good ruler and the tyrant and in doing so reveals Seneca's attitudes towards anger.¹⁰¹ In the dramas, Seneca holds up admonitory characters governed by passions against hortatory characters which illustrate Stoic *exempla*.¹⁰²

Instead of offering gentle guidance in a conversational tone found in the *Epistles*, to encourage his reader to choose the rational life, Seneca's tragedies violently expose the necessity of reason and virtue compared with the evil displayed in the insane and perilous behaviour on stage.¹⁰³ Combined with his explicit advice in *De Ira* about how to deal with other people, the tragedies and the prose works, when read concurrently, provide comprehensive reasons why the way in which life is viewed should be

⁹⁹ Boyle (2006) also identifies the ideas of 'man as appetite, as beast, as existential victim; power, impotence, delusion, self-deception; the futility of compassion; the freedom, desirability and value-paradox of death; man, god, nature, guilt, unmerited suffering; the certainty of human pain; the terror of experienced evil; the inexorable, paradoxical – even morally perverse – order of things; the triumph of evil...' (pp. 197-8). For analysis of philosophical themes in *Medea* and *Thyestes* and the need for the management of anger, see Chapters Four and Five *passim*.

¹⁰⁰ Cf. Rosenmeyer (1989) p. 39; Trinacty (2015) p. 36.

¹⁰¹ Cf. Griffin (1984) and (2003).

¹⁰² Cf. Curley (1986) p. 15.

¹⁰³ From the educative role of the *Epistles*, see Schafer (2011) pp. 32-52. Curley (1986) captures this sentiment when he notes that 'In sum, both the apotretic use of drama as a mirror of the passions and its protretic use of "exempla" make up an implied Senecan theory of the theatre as an educational device' (p.13). I argue that Seneca uses his dramas for educational purposes when exploring how they reveal his opinions about anger. For use of *exempla*, see pp. 22, 43-4, 118-9, 156-7, 168-70, Chapter Five *passim*.

changed. The presentations of the protagonists of *Medea* and *Thyestes* in particular can be interpreted as demonstrating the consequences of neglecting Stoic values and the need to modify reactions to protect oneself and others, to enable virtuous living. Seneca's writing is thought-provoking and forces active audience participation, not only to gain a true understanding of his topics, but also to envisage how the ideas in the plays can be applied to real life. They invite self-reflection about how behaviour, if unchecked, may result in similar scenarios.¹⁰⁴

The tragedies demonstrate Seneca's literary ability by following the Graeco-Roman dramatic practice to incorporate philosophical material into Choral Odes, but not to make expounding philosophy the goal of their songs.¹⁰⁵ He incorporates Stoic sentiments in his plays by exploring common philosophical themes to challenge attitudes towards the world such as human agency versus fate. This is accompanied by his dramatic purpose of presenting traditional myths in a new dramatic form, such as the onstage killing of Medea's sons and her departure to heaven not to Athens as in Euripides (Eur. *Med.* lines 1384-5) and leaving her sons' bodies behind (Sen. *Med.* line 1024).¹⁰⁶ While the Roman audience was more accustomed to displays of violence (for instance, at gladiatorial contests), Seneca's extreme onstage violence may not have been met with such satisfaction.¹⁰⁷ Horace's literary criticism of Greek dramatic convention discussed how, while it is pleasing to witness an event rather than hear reports, some events should not be made visible because of the distress they cause in an audience: instead, they should be communicated by an eloquent messenger (Hor. *Ars P.* lines 179ff.). Of such scenes, Horace included the murders of the children in *Medea* and *Thyestes* neither of which should be shown, and he declared that he would turn away in disgust from such sights

¹⁰⁴ Cf. Chapter Five *passim*.

¹⁰⁵ Cf. Davis (1993) p. 126.

¹⁰⁶ Cf. Costa (1973) p. 8; Nardo (2011).

¹⁰⁷ Cf. Ohlander (1989). For the question about whether Seneca's plays were performed, see pp. 35-41.

(Hor. *Ars P.* lines 185-8). Seneca's onstage slaughter of Medea's children is not only unconventional, but also shocking in its innovation.

It has been argued that during Nero's reign the distinction between theatre and public reality was blurred so that Rome became a 'theatrical world'.¹⁰⁸ Nero himself was a musician, actor and competed in athletic games (Tac. *Ann.* 13.3, 14.14-5).¹⁰⁹ This environment created a space for Seneca to create an exaggerated dramatic world reflecting the problems in reality, both caused by tyranny, and more importantly, the consequences of people who are unable to control their passions, particularly anger and the need for this problem to be addressed.¹¹⁰ Seneca himself reflects the state of the city in his comments in his prose when he describes human life as a '*mime*', assigning roles to play badly (*'hic humanae vitae mimus, qui nobis patres quas male agamus adsignat'* *Ep.* 80.7).¹¹¹ In part, this was because of the multiple 'roles' upper class men were expected to play, socially and politically under close observation of peers.¹¹² This required a considerable awareness of how one behaves, for instance, Seneca advises Lucilius to behave '*as if before a spectator/tamquam spectet aliquis*' (*Ep.* 25.5. Cf. *Ep.* 11.8ff.). Philosophy can address the social problems as can be seen from a Stoic recommendation of consistency/*constantia* in character and action and the difficulties to achieve this in a complicated world, advice which Seneca repeats in his letters to Lucilius (*Ep.* 120.22).¹¹³ From this perspective, the inclusion of philosophy is well-placed in Senecan drama in that the School's doctrines expect certain characteristics to be on display

¹⁰⁸ Cf. Boyle (2006) pp. 180-1. Curley (1986) similarly argues that the political changes from Republic to imperialism impacted on how men interacted, i.e. with the need for a mask and audience (p. 18). This was because changes in values of civic life were required as the existing set were no longer applicable to imperial power. This need justified Seneca's writing of *Thyestes*, a play where crime that challenges traditional values and blurs the distinction between man and animal, kin and foe (p. 153). For a discussion of where Seneca's play reflects the contemporary situation in Rome, see *Thy.* lines 459-67, 607-8, 659-662 which have been interpreted as attacks against Roman imperialism cf. Curley (1986) pp. 182-3. For society as theatre and metatheatricality in Seneca, see Curley (1986) pp. 211ff.

¹⁰⁹ Cf. Romm (2014) pp. 120-1.

¹¹⁰ Cf. Motto and Clark (1982) p. 134.

¹¹¹ Cf. Boyle (2006) p. 181.

¹¹² Cf. Boyle (2006) p. 182.

¹¹³ Cf. *Ep.* 35.4; 77; 109.6; Ker (2009a) pp. 115-9.

and the anti-*exempla* found in abundance in his dramas provide ideal case-studies for education in virtue and vice.¹¹⁴

Senecan Tragedy

To contextualise Seneca's philosophical outlook, it is necessary to consider the forms of writing his ideas take and the methods in which he communicates. He is believed to have written eight tragedies: *Hercules Furens*, *Troades*, *Phoenissae*, *Phaedra*, *Thyestes*, *Agamemnon*, *Oedipus* and *Medea*. He may also have written a ninth, *Hercules Oetaeus*.¹¹⁵ Studies of Senecan tragedies range from questions concerning dating, authorship, performance, reception, *imitatio* and originality to stylistic devices, particularly declamatory effects.¹¹⁶ The dating of the plays is problematic due to the absence of satisfactory references to confirm the date of composition.¹¹⁷ Regardless of the position which one takes on dating, the underlying nature of the tragedies and their relationship to Stoicism remains unchanged.

The authorship of the plays is also debated. Historically, a common challenge was Seneca's lack of reference to his dramas in his prose works, moral essays and *Epistles*, and that there is minimal reference to the plays by other authors compared with his prose.¹¹⁸ In line with recent scholarship,

¹¹⁴ Cf. Boyle (2006) 'Stoicism as a philosophy abounds in theatrical tropes, as both Greek Stoic writings and Seneca's own *Epistles to Lucilius* testify, demanding from its heroes a capacity for dramatic display and exemplary performance. And Stoicism was the philosophy of prime choice for the Neronian elite' (p. 182).

¹¹⁵ Any suggestion that he wrote *Octavia* has been discredited cf. Tarrant (1978) pp. 214-5 n. 7; Boyle (2006) pp. 221-3.

¹¹⁶ For the issue of authorship, see Fisher (1945); Canter (1925); Bishop (1985); Kohn (2003). For questions concerning performance, see Hadas (1939) pp. 221-5; Marti (1945) pp. 219-20; Zwierlein (1966); Herington (1982) p. 520; Fitch (2000); Boyle (2006) p. 192; Costa (1974) pp. 100-1; Calder III (1976) pp. 4-6; Pratt (1983) pp. 16-21; Hollingsworth (2001); Erasmo (2005) pp. 135-7; Trinacty (2015) pp. 32-6. For stylistic devices, see Canter (1925) p. 80, 173-5, 177-9; Haywood (1943) p. 246; Braden (1970); Calder III (1976) pp. 7-9; Mayer (1990); Boyle (1997) pp. 15-31; Hollingsworth (2001); Wilson (2007); Buckley (2013) p. 208ff. For a general analysis of stylistic devices, see Pratt (1983) pp. 30-3, for declamation, see pp. 132-49 and for rhetorical drama, see pp. 150-63. All these issues are discussed by Boyle (2006) p. 189ff.

¹¹⁷ Cf. Griffin (1976, 1992) p. 395ff.; Fitch (1981); Nisbet (2008).

¹¹⁸ Kohn (2003) notes intertextual references could have been made: for instance, many of Medea's statements (e.g. *Med.* lines 203-51) demonstrate the negative effects of anger propounded in *De Ira* (p. 274 n. 23). Dio Cass. (61.3) reported Seneca's work in exile (*Poly.*) and Tacitus mentioned various speeches written by Seneca, many of which were for Nero (Tac. *Ann.* 13.3) (p. 276). However, Quintilian quoted Seneca's *Medea* 'what lands do you

I dismiss the suggestion that the lack of intertextual references is because the works were written by two different men, a conclusion which is supported by the absence of satisfactory historical evidence for another Seneca.¹¹⁹ Seneca's disdain for gladiatorial combat (*Ep.* 7), does not mean that he was too meek or unwilling to enhance his drama through grotesque displays on stage, such as Medea visually killing her sons.¹²⁰ I also reject the suggestion that Seneca is so well-versed in poetry he would not need to rely on other people's works for ideas for a play because this conclusion overlooks the tradition for authors to competitively adapt predecessors' works to demonstrate their ability (*imitatio*).¹²¹ For the purpose of my research and its focus on the presentation of passions in the selected texts, balancing these arguments, and from identifying the similarities of themes and consistencies in presentation of his ideas in Seneca's prose works and tragedies, I will accept that Seneca wrote these plays.

Whether Seneca's plays were performed is relevant to a discussion about Seneca's aim of inspiring self-improvement and resolving the problems of passions because how the audience or reader respond to what they see, hear or read may affect the degree of self-reflection and philosophical interest which Seneca provokes. Seneca's use of rhetorical devices has led some scholars to argue that the tragedies were not performed and were not intended to be performed.¹²² Those who believe the tragedies were

bid me seek? — quas peti terras iubes' (*Med.* line 453) when he discussed different types of questions (cf. Quint. *Inst.* 9.2.9) (p. 276 n. 41). In the same paper, Kohn identifies citations of Seneca's plays in later authors, Probus 4.224.22 and 246.19; Tertullian *De anim.* 42.2, *De Resurrectione carnis* 1; the commentator on Stat. *Theb.* 4.530; Terentianus Maurus (6 p. 404) and Prisc. (2 p. 253.7) (p. 276 n. 40).

¹¹⁹ The fifth-century poet Sidonius Apollinaris seems to have believed that Seneca *tragicus* and Seneca *philosophus* were two different men and he speaks of the sons of Corduba (Sid. Apoll. *Car.* 9.232-8) cf. Kohn (2003) p. 278. In addition, I identify from Seneca's boldness, for instance in *De Clementia* to control Nero (cf. Tac. *Ann.* 13.2.1), a challenge to the suggestion that he did not compose the plays because of fear of the emperor's wrath. This is reinforced by the fact that earlier in his life, he remained undeterred in his writing, despite Caligula's apparent jealousy of Seneca's oratorical skills (cf. Dio Cass. 59.19).

¹²⁰ This argument against good taste was used by Albrecht (1938) to suggest it was a different Seneca who wrote the plays, as discussed by Fisher (1945) p. 110. Cf. Herrmann (1924) pp. 58-62 discussed in Kohn (2003) p. 275. For Seneca's response to the gladiatorial tradition in Rome, see Barton (1989) pp. 1-36; Cagniart (2000) pp. 607-18.

¹²¹ As argued by Fisher (1945) p. 109. For *imitatio* in Seneca, see Cleasby (1907), Goldberg (2014).

¹²² Leo (1878) declares that: 'These are not really tragedies... but declamations patterned after tragedy and divided into acts' (p. 158) translated by Goldberg (1996) p. 275.

intended for performance have considered three possibilities: (i) recitation, (ii) performance, and they were performed, or (iii) produced for performance which did not occur in antiquity.¹²³ If the plays were performed, it would most likely have been on temporary stages erected in private homes using slaves as actors (cf. Cic. *Fin.* 2.23), which may explain why there is sparse reference to the plays by other authors.¹²⁴

It was common practice in the first-century AD for there to be public and private readings (by the author or a freedman) of literary material as a means of publication and opportunity for feedback and editing (cf. Juv. *Sat.* 1.1-6; Plin. *Ep.* 3.18.4). Consequently, 'recitational drama' became a popular genre, which is why many people assume Seneca wrote in this genre. Indeed, some scholars use Seneca's detailed descriptive passages, such as *Med.* lines 380-430, as evidence for *recitatio*.¹²⁵ Quintilian's claim to have heard debates between Seneca and Pomponius Secundus about diction appropriate to tragedy has led some scholars to believe that because Secundus wrote both staged and recitational plays, Seneca may have done the same (cf. Tac. *Dial.* 3).¹²⁶ These various attempts by scholars to prove that Seneca was not writing for performance should be met with caution. I support the view that he is a momentous dramatist considering his wide influence on drama.¹²⁷ By accepting that these plays may have been

¹²³ Cf. Calder III (1976) p. 4.

¹²⁴ Cf. Boyle (2006) p. 13 n. 37.

¹²⁵ For example, Costa (1973) argues that the 'vivid account of Medea's movements points firmly to recitation of the tragedies because the nurse describes what would have been visible' (p. 108 commentary on *Med.* lines 380-430. Comment made by Hollingsworth (2001) p. 139). Yet Hollingsworth (2001) notes the context, that she is describing facial expressions that would not be seen from the one mask, that the nurse's speech is an implicit stage direction and this is a common technique even found in other playwrights such as Plautus, and concludes that instead of being a substitute, it complements the staged event (Hollingsworth (2001) p. 139). Hollingsworth diplomatically concludes that it was accepted that Seneca may have recited his plays, but the controversy lies in his intention in writing: 'Since recitational poetry does not appear to resemble Senecan tragedy any more than it resembles the other genres that were read, its popularity and content should not lead us to the conclusion that Seneca wrote for the recital hall. Instead, the lack of similarity should move us closer to recognizing the plays as drama for the theater' (p. 144).

¹²⁶ Cf. Hollingsworth (2001) p. 144.

¹²⁷ Boyle (2006) correctly recognises Seneca to be '...one of the great tragedians of the European tradition' and continues to list the dramatic features of Seneca's plays that influenced Renaissance drama (p. 189). Most relevant to the consideration of passions is

performed, I will view the audience reaction in terms of what was seen on stage and will relate this to possible responses to the presentation of anger and how this contributes to education in virtue and vice and to prompting self-reflection during and after the performance. In Chapter Five, I will focus on how a modern audience may react with a degree of awareness of Stoicism as opposed to making assumptions about Seneca's ancient audience for which there is minimal evidence.

Features of pantomime have been identified in Seneca's tragedies, which suggest that his plays were performed in antiquity.¹²⁸ He was aware of pantomime's popularity, particularly with Nero (cf. Suet. *Ner.* 6.3, 21.3), which may explain Seneca's choice to incorporate its stylistic features so that he can appeal to contemporary taste as well as establishing an innovative approach to theatre.¹²⁹ Ancient pantomime integrated tragic and mythological themes with particular interest in expressing the emotional conflict of those experiencing extreme passions and centred on violence and death.¹³⁰ Topics include the fickleness of fortune, madness, obsession by grief, *furor* of love, anger resulting from divine possession and lust for revenge.¹³¹ The plots regularly incorporated onstage dismemberment, tecnophagy (cf. Lucian *Salt.* 80; Sid. *Apoll. Car.* 23.277-99), self-mutilation and killing of family members (cf. Lucian *Salt.* 41), all of which underpin Seneca's *Medea* and *Thyestes*.¹³² Pantomime contains elements of rhetoric and its inclusion in Seneca's plays would allow for performance (cf. Lucian

the psychological insight into human nature which Seneca's tragedies offer, as will be explored in Chapters Four and Five *passim*.

¹²⁸ Cf. Zanobi (2014). Zimmermann (1990) identifies three pantomime scenes in Seneca's tragedies, which are present in *Medea*, (i) 'actual pantomime' where the chorus describes the action of the character (lines 849-78); (ii) an actor describes the action of another character (lines 380-396) and (iii) 'short pantomimic commentaries' where the Chorus or actor announces the entrance/exit of another character while describing their movements (lines 186) (pp. 161-7). Arguments outlined in Zanobi (2014) p. 92.

¹²⁹ Seneca's interest in and praise of pantomime is evidenced in his *Epistles*: '*We are apt to wonder at skilled dancers because their gestures are perfectly adapted to the meaning of the piece and its accompanying emotions, and their movements match the speed of the dialogue — Mirari solemus saltandi peritos, quod in omnem significationem rerum et adfectuum parata illorum est manus, et verborum velocitatem gestus adsequitur*' (*Ep.* 121.6).

¹³⁰ Cf. Zanobi (2014) p. 1.

¹³¹ Cf. Zanobi (2014) pp. 12-3.

¹³² Cf. Zanobi (2014) p. 13.

Salt. 35; 65). Typically, 'pantomimic scenes' have been identified in *Medea* where the Chorus describes the protagonist's movements (*Med.* lines 849ff.) and where she describes her actions (lines 382-90) to demonstrate her derangement.¹³³ The inclusion of such elements is a way in which Seneca innovatively adapts tragedy to meet Neronian taste and the contemporary popularity of pantomime (cf. *QNat.* 7.32.3).¹³⁴

Ancient Roman tragedy served to provide popular entertainment (cf. *Cic. Fam.* 7.1).¹³⁵ Primary passions shown on masks were painted in a more exaggerated way in Roman than in Greek theatre because emotional expression through poetry, rhetoric and elaborate stagecraft was very important for the Romans.¹³⁶ This may explain Seneca's display of extreme characters and their passions in his plays. The Imperial milieu changed the meaning of tragedy in two main ways: (1) it demonstrated the closeness of theatrical performance to everyday life, rather than religious scenes and occasions and (2) it presented ordinary life in Rome on a grandiose scale, through the vastness of imperial buildings, processional shows and military displays.¹³⁷ Roman dramatic presentations differed from their Greek counterparts because the latter were religious performances, designed to stimulate the audience intellectually through a simple stage to avoid distraction from the plays' lessons.¹³⁸ By contrast, in Roman drama, the plays aim to entertain on the same scale as gladiatorial combat, hence the melodrama, declamatory dialogue to appeal to the audiences' appreciation of rhetoric and the occurrence of horrific events on stage.¹³⁹

¹³³ Cf. Zimmermann (2008).

¹³⁴ Cf. Zimmermann (2008) p. 224.

¹³⁵ Cf. Henry and Henry (1985) p. 2.

¹³⁶ Cf. Henry and Henry (1985) p. 3.

¹³⁷ Cf. Henry and Henry (1985) p. 3.

¹³⁸ Cf. Curley (1986) pp. 208-10.

¹³⁹ Cf. Hadas (1939) pp. 222-4; Goldberg (1996) p. 267. Despite the theatrical differences in Greek and Roman theatres, Seneca's plays include features taken from Greek tragedy. These include the epigrammatic style, plots advancing through monologues, set speeches or 'dramatized *suasoriae*' or debating, the latter taking the form of *stichomythia* (dialogue in alternating lines. Cf. *Med.* lines 150-176) and *antilabe* (division of lines between two speakers). Cf. Costa (1974) pp. 104-5. The rapid-fire dialogue between characters hastens the pace of Seneca's drama and demonstrates the quick-wittedness and linguistic dexterity of the characters. Citing *Med.* lines 168-71 as an example, Braden (1970) reports how 'Characters bounce off each other like billiard balls' (p. 19) and Buckley (2013) argues that

In keeping with the dramatic tradition and the common practice of *imitatio* in ancient dramatists, Seneca's protagonists are not humble men but from royal or semi-divine origin because 'great' men are particularly interesting (cf. Arist. *Poet.* Chapter 15). Aristotle believes that characters are increasingly fascinating when their change in fortune from prosperity to poverty or from proud elation to profound misery is observed (Arist. *Poet.* Chapter 13). As well as being of high status, such men's emotional intensity captures audience interest and holds their attention. Seneca's Choruses meet many of the expectations laid out by Horace who defined the role of this identifiable group (usually comprised of citizens), with varied dramatic and structural functions. In Greek drama, Horace argued that the Chorus only sing what is appropriate to the plot; demonstrate loyalty to the good character to whom they offer friendly advice; control those of bad temper; approve of those who are not anxious towards transgressors; commend moderation; respect confidences; pray to the gods to reverse ill fortune to the wretched and desert the proud (Hor. *Ars P.* lines 193-201). Seneca follows the Greek model of having the Chorus break the action by providing interludes, to achieve dramatic effect and to contextualise the play by responding to its words and actions, thus contributing to the large issues of the tragedy.¹⁴⁰ Seneca's Choruses also address topics which are relevant to everyday life illustrating how philosophy is helpful to overcome personal difficulties and that it involves a life-long journey to facilitate *tranquillitas*.¹⁴¹

Seneca seeks to make the traditional mythological stories and Greek tragedies relevant and interesting to his peers and to use these stories to form a basis for provoking thought in his audience and readers.¹⁴² He follows the genre's tradition of reflecting and questioning its current world, particularly with his focus on the problems of tyrannical rule.¹⁴³ Thus, the plays require suitable images for the audiences, for example, contemporary

Med. lines 157-67 'is not so much conversation as verbal duel...' (p. 209). Cf. Littlewood (2004) pp. 40-7.

¹⁴⁰ Seneca does differ in that his choruses do not end the play and it is not assumed that they remain on stage throughout the play. Cf. Tarrant (1978) pp. 221-8.

¹⁴¹ For a definition of *tranquillitas*, see pp. 17, 22, 25.

¹⁴² Cf. Mayer (1990); Trinacty (2015) p. 31.

¹⁴³ Cf. Trinacty (2015) p. 30.

social realities, religious ceremonies, institutions, laws and customs.¹⁴⁴ For Seneca, these include religious formulas where the children's murders are ritualised (for instance, in *Med.* lines 562ff., 905, 967ff., 976; *Thy.* lines 767ff.). In addition to being influenced by his predecessors, Seneca took advantage of the interest in his own time in adaptations of traditional Greek writing. He knew that using titles of famous Greek plays such as *Medea* would attract attention from a wider audience than just the elite educated Romans who were preoccupied with his prose.¹⁴⁵

His deviation from traditional models, variations in plot and violent presentation undoubtedly provoked discussion at the time and this continues among modern scholars. When placed in its literary context, Senecan drama has been considered to be inspired less by Attic tragedy (despite the *imitatio* of mythic plots) and more by the later Greek dramatic form, that of New Comedy (such as those by Plautus and Terence) and by Latin writers of the Augustan era, even though extant evidence of these later writers is limited.¹⁴⁶ This argument is drawn, in particular, from Seneca's division of plays usually into five acts, separated by four choral odes and the independence of individual scenes.¹⁴⁷

Analysis of some distinctive features of Senecan drama, in particular his use of entrance monologues and asides, reveals material which is particularly relevant to the discussion of characters' states of mind when governed by

¹⁴⁴ Cf. Steele (1922b) pp. 1-31; Hadas (1939) pp. 220-1; Henry and Henry (1985) p. 157; Tarrant (1995) pp. 225-7; Littlewood (2004) pp. 188-91. Buckley (2013) highlights examples of the 'clear Romanizing intent of the tragedies' including references to the Roman gods of the home/*lares* (*Med.* line 224). She claims that the armies 'look, behave, and fight like the Roman army' (*Thy.* lines 184-185), that the Chorus, though based in Greece, identify themselves as Romans/*Quirites* (*Thy.* line 396) and Seneca presents the world from 'the Roman geopolitical perspective' (cf. *Thy.* lines 369-79; *Med.* lines 364-79) (p. 217). Trinacty (2015) observes that 'His [Seneca's] tragedies provide a lens through which one can observe actions and speeches that resonate with his historical period, even if one should not assume that behind the characters such as Atreus or Eteocles lurk a veiled allusion to Nero...' (p. 30).

¹⁴⁵ Cf. Tarrant (1978) and (1995).

¹⁴⁶ Cf. Tarrant (1978); Littlewood (2004) pp. 183-5.

¹⁴⁷ For this structure in Menander, see Tarrant (1978) pp. 221-2. For the independence of individual scenes which is proposed to reflect that of the postclassical period, see Tarrant (1978) pp. 228-31. For the influence of and deviation from Augustan and Republican Roman tragedy on Seneca, see Tarrant (1978) pp. 255-61.

passions such as fear and anger. Seneca is said to have developed the convention of the suspension of dramatic time through entrance monologues by characters which ignore the presence of others on the stage; this leads to interruption to stage action and reference to the other characters on stage in the third person.¹⁴⁸ For instance, Medea announces the creaking door signifying Creon's arrival (*Med.* lines 177-8), while Creon launches into a tirade about her (lines 177-86) before she approaches, forcing him to acknowledge her presence (line 186).¹⁴⁹ Similarly, Jason justifies his desertion of Medea, blaming fate, and is wary of her ferocity '*etsi ferox est corde nec patiens iugi*' before she engages with him in conversation (lines 431ff.). It is possible in *Medea*, that the protagonists' constant presence on the stage forces interrupted asides. However, this technique is also present in *Thyestes* when Atreus witnesses Thyestes speaking with his son, yet continues to discuss his plans of assault in terms of an Umbrian hound (*Thy.* lines 491ff.). These speeches are intended not to be overheard either because the speakers do not wish their feelings to be publicly known or because they involve plotting the ruination of other characters: from the ensuing interactions it appears that neither Medea or Thyestes have heard the comments. Seneca's inclusion of such speeches is necessary to explain the progress of the plot to the audience and to demonstrate the isolation which developing passions cause their sufferer in the sense that the fluctuating thought processes make it harder to engage with the outside world.

It can be concluded that Seneca's tragedies violently show the catastrophic consequences of extreme passions in order to illustrate the differences between virtue and vice. The plays also incorporate a range of Stoic themes, such as religion, mortality and destiny which prove relevant to the

¹⁴⁸ For similar isolated entrance monologues in New Comedy due to the absence of Choruses, see Tarrant (1978) pp. 237-41.

¹⁴⁹ For its limited presence in Attic drama and the postclassical influence on Seneca of communicating details of stage business, such as Medea hearing the creaking door, see Tarrant (1978) pp. 246-7.

theory of passions when they are considered in terms of how attitudes influence decision-making.¹⁵⁰

How does Seneca communicate his ideas?

Seneca's arguments are largely based on his personal experience, on which he regularly draws, particularly in his *Epistles*, to illustrate his point as well as to make his ideas more accessible. Seneca's style ranges from a lively but forceful conversational tone, particularly in the *Epistles*, to a more didactic approach when dealing with more serious subjects in his prose. He presents larger than life personalities in the dramas to show the worst aspects of human nature in a similar way to how he uses specific *exempla* in his prose. In this thesis, these personalities will be treated as, so to speak, case studies to assess whether Stoicism would be helpful in curing the passions of those people who are worst affected by them. Seneca's essays follow the established tradition of philosophical treatises, as well as finding opportunities for originality. Seneca's works are accessible to a wide audience because in his prose he chooses interesting and relevant topics, something which he also achieves in his tragedies through his plots and dynamic characterisation. His recommendations for self-improvement depend on generic constraints, though common techniques can be found across the works, all of which are designed to hold attention. These include clear, detailed definitions which are typically Stoic, second-person address, direct speech and dialogue. Other techniques include the use of *exempla*, interlocutors, rhetorical questions, various figures of speech as well as poetic and philosophical references.

Seneca employs declamatory style and rhetoric in his prose, in keeping with the stylistic expectations of his writing in an era where oratory was in abundance. As the third stage of Roman formal education, Seneca and many of his contemporary audience would have experienced training in rhetoric, making it an appropriate means for communicating his

¹⁵⁰ Cf. Chapter Four *passim*.

messages.¹⁵¹ Rhetoric structures Seneca's plays to create dramatic tension and to develop articulate characters, all of which keep his audience engrossed.¹⁵² The use of declamatory style is part of Seneca's innovative contribution to the tragic genre as his plays focus on the use of language rather than elaborate visual displays, lessening the importance of action which exposes him to the overly-harsh criticism of producing largely static plays.¹⁵³ He deploys common declamation themes such as kingship¹⁵⁴ and enhances dramatic scenes with his eloquent characters, for example through Medea's magic (*Med.* lines 670-739).¹⁵⁵

Stemming from his own schooling, a prevalent stylistic feature of Seneca's writing which is of particular importance for this thesis is the use of *exempla*. He praises the importance of this technique for moral lessons, to illustrate his arguments and to help his reader understand his views by providing something to which they can relate and choose to emulate or avoid.¹⁵⁶ Seneca employs this Stoic method of education to inspire reflection demonstrating personal responsibility for self-improvement.¹⁵⁷ These examples of behaviour take positive forms to emulate or negative ones (*exempla mala*) to avoid.¹⁵⁸ His *exempla* range from philosophers to emperors to members of the plebs and are well-known Greek and Roman individuals, both ancient and contemporary. In *De Ira*, Seneca explains that from these *exempla*, Novatus and the readers will learn (i) the extent of evil in anger when it controls extremely powerful men and (ii) how it can impose

¹⁵¹ Cf. Canter (1925); Haywood (1943) p. 256; Costa (1974) pp. 100ff.; Pratt (1983) pp. 30-1; Boyle (2006) pp. 193-7; Buckley (2013) pp. 208-9; Williams (2015) pp.137ff.

¹⁵² Cf. Curley (1986) pp. 189-91.

¹⁵³ Cf. Sutton (1986) p. 1; Segal (2008) p. 141.

¹⁵⁴ Cf. Tarrant (1995) pp. 228-9.

¹⁵⁵ Seneca has been accused of excessive use of mythological references by his Choruses but modern scholarship is appropriately sympathetic to these, interpreting them as thematically relevant rather than 'rhetorical decoration' (Davis (1993) p. 64). This is true of the retelling of the Argonaut expedition (cf. *Med.* lines 301f., 579f.) and the Tantalus myth (*Thy.* lines 136f.) because they place the tragedies in their current context, offer explanations to the events which occur during the plays and give past events current interest.

¹⁵⁶ Cf. *Ep.* 11.9; 95.66-7; *Tranq.* 1.12; Turpin (2008) p. 365.

¹⁵⁷ As 'vehicles for moral reflection' (Turpin (2008) p. 365), *exempla* encourage 'active engagement with ethical issues' and, rather than posing as 'easy, simple lessons', they act as an 'intellectual goad' (Gloyn (2017) p. 130).

¹⁵⁸ Cf. Roller (2004) pp. 4-5; Tarrant (2006) pp. 8-11; Turpin (2008) pp. 367-8; Gloyn (2017) pp. 142-3.

great control on itself when controlled by the stronger influence of fear (3.13.7. Cf. 3.22.1). Anecdotes are also used to show appropriate behaviour in response to anger, such as Socrates,¹⁵⁹ Plato,¹⁶⁰ Cato¹⁶¹ and Diogenes of Babylon,¹⁶² all of whom are famed for their self-control and enlightened views which became influential centuries after their deaths. Seneca also recalls stories of people practising cures for anger, including Hieronymus of Rhodes (1.19.3), Heraclitus of Ephesus and Democritus of Abdera (2.10.5. Cf. 3.6.3), the athletic trainer Pyrrhus (2.14.3), Quintus Sextius (cf. 2.36.1, 3.36.1) and Pythagoras (3.9.2) which will be discussed in Chapter Three. Chapters Four and Five discuss how the characters in *Medea* and *Thyestes* provide extensive negative examples to avoid. I use their failings as an opportunity to explore reformation and treatment of passions using the techniques which Seneca recommends in *De Ira* and Stoicism in general.

Seneca introduces interlocutors (imaginary or historical) in his prose works to pose leading questions in a philosophical debate which allows him to reinforce his point of view in his response.¹⁶³ Similarly in the tragedies, characters engage with each other to either justify their behaviour or to object to the approaches taken by other people. In *De Ira*, the unnamed interlocutor, who is introduced by ‘*inquit*’, may or may not be the addressee, though I will assume him to be Novatus because his brother has appealed to Seneca for advice. Novatus is eager to learn about the subject of anger and how to cure it.¹⁶⁴ However, he is sceptical of his ability to remove it (2.12.3. Cf. 3.39.3). The questions asked by the interlocutor can be interpreted as representing many of the reader’s anxieties and the issues which disturb good Roman men. He takes either the common views about anger or those of philosophical rivals, all of which Seneca seeks to refute, and also allows Seneca to refute objections he may see coming in advance, replicating the nature of a real dialogue.

¹⁵⁹ Cf. 1.15.3, 2.7.1, 3.11.2, 3.13.3-4.

¹⁶⁰ Cf. 2.21.10, 3.12.5-7.

¹⁶¹ Cf. 2.32.2-3, 3.38.2.

¹⁶² Cf. 3.38.1.

¹⁶³ Cf. Braund (2009) p. 53; Roller (2015) pp. 60-2.

¹⁶⁴ Cf. 1.1, 2.2.1, 2.31.2, 3.3.1, 3.5.1.

Sometimes philosophers appear as interlocutors, often to undermine the opposing schools' beliefs about anger, for example, Aristotle¹⁶⁵ and his successor, Theophrastus of Eresos,¹⁶⁶ details of which will be discussed in the first chapter. Elsewhere, Seneca refers to Stoics to strengthen his arguments, for instance, using Zeno's view that even after the wound is healed, a scar remains in the Sage's mind, so that he feels the '*shadows/umbra*' of passion but not passion itself (1.16.7).¹⁶⁷ In addition, rhetorical questions are frequently found in *De Ira*. These are largely used to convince Novatus that anger is to be avoided and removed, but are also used to form a means to show the alternatives to angry responses. This device is used to discredit opposition viewpoints, for instance those of Aristotle and his followers.¹⁶⁸ Seneca's commitment to an engagement with opposing schools illustrates how he frames his ideas within the context of existing philosophical debates in an attempt to establish his philosophical identity.

Seneca's texts also contain *sententiae*, short pithy statements, with moral undertones, which are simple enough to be internalised and remembered, which is particularly beneficial for ethical learning (cf. *Ep.* 94.43; 108.8-9, 11). This rhetorical technique was common in the ancient world to keep important philosophical principles in mind in an initially oral tradition. Horace alludes to this technique when he advises poets to be succinct in their precepts so that they are easily understood and memorable (Hor. *Ars P.* lines 335-6). These memorable phrases can be found in *Medea* during her lively debate with the Nurse: '*The time can never be wrong for virtue — Numquam potest non esse virtuti locus*' (*Med.* line 161); '*Who can hope for nothing should despair of nothing — Qui nil potest sperare, desperet nihil*' (line 163) and '*Treat as guiltless one who's guilty for you — tibi innocens sit quisquis est pro te nocens*' (line 503).¹⁶⁹ In addition, Seneca's works are

¹⁶⁵ Cf. 1.9.2, 1.17.1.

¹⁶⁶ Cf. 1.12.3, 1.14.1.

¹⁶⁷ Although it is debated whether this statement was actually made, its presence shows that Seneca is turning to a higher authority to legitimate his claims Cf. Cooper and Procopé (1995) p. 35 n. 40.

¹⁶⁸ Cf. 1.9.2, 1.17.1, 2.13.1, 3.3.1, 3.3.5. For Seneca's refutation of Aristotle, see pp. 99ff.

¹⁶⁹ Cf. *Ep.* 94.43.

alive with colourful metaphors to enhance his descriptions of his characters' actions, appearances, thoughts and beliefs. He discusses the significance of using appropriate metaphors and similes because he recognises the importance of imagery to persuade (cf. *Ep.* 59.6-7).¹⁷⁰ He draws upon images from the human and the natural world, refers to the vice of passions in military terms and employs medical metaphors to show how anger is a sickness of the mind.¹⁷¹ These stylistic features and the many themes which recur in Senecan prose and drama, (most commonly those of power, exile, family, fate, god, nature, magic and supernatural powers and madness), will be discussed at relevant times in Chapters Four and Five to show the consistencies in Seneca's arguments across the genres in which he writes and the level of philosophical ideas communicated in his plays. In addition to unifying his work, these topics are significant to his drama as much as to everyday life, making his plays both topical and comprehensive.

To add gravitas to his arguments, Seneca regularly quotes various philosophers, poets, historians and playwrights in his prose.¹⁷² On occasions where sources are not acknowledged, these references have been identified by modern scholars.¹⁷³ Seneca also expands upon traditional metaphors, such as the idea that there are two paths to virtue and vice and the mistaken belief that the former is steeper (2.13.1).¹⁷⁴ These

¹⁷⁰ Cf. Larson (1992) pp. 51, 54.

¹⁷¹ For the comparison of anger with beasts, see pp. 92, 108-9, 127, 207-9. For Seneca's use of military metaphors in his war against passion, see pp. 88-9. For applying philosophy as medicine for the soul, see pp. 81-4.

¹⁷² For allusions to Homer, see 1.12.5 (Hom. *Il.* 18.309) and 1.8.20 (Hom. *Il.* 23.724). For allusions to Ovid, see 1.3.5 (Ov. *Met.* 7.545-6) and 2.9.2 (Ov. *Met.* 1.144-8). Seneca uses an anonymous epigram at 2.15.5 (*FLP Anonymous* fr. 24; *Ep.* 40.4; 94.51). He later paraphrases Vergil at 2.35.6 (Ver. *Aen.* 8.702 and 8.703). For the presence of Ovidian and Vergilian references in Seneca's works, see Maguinness (1956) especially pp. 92ff. For further discussion about examples where Plato is quoted in *De Ira*, for instance at 1.6.5 (cf. Pl. *Resp.* 1.335D); 1.19.7 (cf. Pl. *Leg.* 11.934A6-B2) and 2.20.2 (cf. Pl. *Leg.* 2.666A2-6), see pp. 116-7. For historians, see 1.20.6 (cf. Livy fr. 66 Weissenborn-Müller). 1.20.4 cites the dramatist Accius, fr. 168. cf. *Clem.* 1.12.4, 2.2.2. At 2.11.3, Seneca quotes the Republican Knight and author of mimes, Laberius, (fr. 126 Ribbeck). Cf. Tarrant (2006) pp. 1-5.

¹⁷³ See its origin in Hes. *Op.* 287-92. The idea that personal vices are hidden but men are quick to recognise those in others at 2.28.8 is also present in Catull. (22.20-1).

¹⁷⁴ Basore (1928, 1958) directs attention to the beginning of Arist. *Hymn to virtue* (Bergk, *Poet. Lyr. Graec.* ii p.360) for a similar argument (p. 194). Cooper and Procopé (1995) note that the C5thBC Greek sophist Prodicus wrote about the 'choice offered to Heracles' (cf. Xen. *Mem.* 2.1.21-34) (pp. 53-4 n. 23) cf. Kaster (2010) p. 113 n. 166.

references show Seneca's erudition and provide an opportunity for other authors to reinforce his ideas or to show the alternative stance with which Seneca may or may not be inviting his reader or audience to agree. His well-educated audience is likely to have been able to recognise these allusions, which is helpful for their engagement with the texts, increasing the likelihood of subsequent self-reflection which will assist in the process of removing passions. Seneca's references to other writers show his appeal to the intellect, as well as seeking additional authorities to strengthen his arguments.

The texts

In preparation for detailed analysis of these texts, I will summarise the content of *De Ira*, *De Clementia*, *Medea* and *Thyestes*. The two prose texts can be read concurrently as *ira* and *clementia* are alternative responses to provocative situations. Not only are there structural and methodological parallels in these books but the nature of anger and its catastrophic consequences are discussed in a similar fashion.¹⁷⁵ *De Ira* challenges the traditional views about anger by showing that it is entirely unfavourable and must be removed to allow man to live the best life. Seneca aims to dispel common arguments about anger and the philosophical views of Aristotle, his followers the Peripatetics, and the Epicureans.¹⁷⁶ *De Clementia* revises the Latin concept of *clementia* to involve mildness in nature and anger to be absent from it, that it is a virtue to aspire to, connected with *humanitas* (appropriate concern for other people) and the goodness of the soul, claims which Seneca was the first Roman to make (cf. 1.20.1).¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁵ Cf. Braund (2009) pp. 70-3; Kaster (2010) p. 135.

¹⁷⁶ For the Aristotelian concepts about passions, including anger, see Fortenbaugh (1975); Leighton (1982) and (2002); Roberts (1989); Kemp and Strongman (1995) pp. 398-401; Sihvola (1996); Stocker and Hegeman (1996); Cooper (1999); Konstan (2003); Kalimtzis (2012) pp. 73-102. For Epicurean views about the subject see, Long (1986) pp. 49-69; Nussbaum (1986); Annas (1989); Procopé (1998) pp. 171-96; Tsouna (2007b); Armstrong (2008) pp. 81-8; Asmis (2011); Tsouna (2011).

¹⁷⁷ Cf. *Clem.* 1.5.3-5, 20.3; *Constant.* 2.32.2, 3.5.7, 32.3; Korfmacher (1946); Griffin (2003); Braund (2009) pp. 30-44; Hruščă (2012); Malaspina (2014) pp. 178-80.

De Ira is addressed to Seneca's Roman senator brother, Lucius Annaeus Novatus.¹⁷⁸ In the tradition of polite letters, Seneca responds to Novatus' request to write about the common ancient *topos*: 'You've pressed me, Novatus, to prescribe a way of soothing anger — *Exegisti a me, Novate, ut scriberem quemadmodum posset ira leniri*' (1.1.1). Novatus has 'longed for/*maxime desiderasti*' guidance about how to remove or at least rein in and curb anger (3.1.1). Seneca is challenging the fundamental Roman socio-political beliefs and the value system on which the Romans depended. For instance, Novatus as an ambitious Roman politician, would probably consider anger to be important to manage public criminality and to maintain military motivation.¹⁷⁹ Seneca has the task of removing these deeply seated internal beliefs with logical reasoning as this is a way of persuading his peers to change their attitudes and behaviours. Although it is addressed to his brother, *De Ira* is relevant and accessible to anyone and could be directed at the emperor as guidance for his conduct in the same way as *De Clementia* was to Nero.¹⁸⁰ Thus, the main purpose of *De Ira* is to provide a detailed account of anger in advance of offering solutions to cure it, with a view to preventing it from arising to protect the individual and society. Seneca's definition of anger will be predominately drawn from this text and his attitudes towards potential cures will be analysed accordingly.

De Clementia offers a detailed explanation to Nero of how he should rule, his power and responsibility to his subjects (cf. *Clem.* 1.1.2, 4-5, 7, 1.14.1-2) and which virtues he should practise, comparing a good ruler and the tyrant.¹⁸¹ My reading of the text concentrates on the arguments that relate

¹⁷⁸ It has been suggested *De Ira* was written between 41-52AD possibly during Seneca's exile in Corsica. For details about the possibilities of dating this work, see Braund (2009) pp. 16-7; Kaster (2010) p. 97 n. 1.

¹⁷⁹ Cf. van Hoof (2007) pp. 66-9.

¹⁸⁰ Cf. Romm (2014) pp. 90-2.

¹⁸¹ Seneca states that Nero is eighteen years old (his birthday was 15th December 55AD) suggesting *De Clementia* was written at some point during that year. However, dating of this work has caused controversy because Seneca claims that Nero has not killed anyone (*Clem.* 1.1.2; 1.1.5) leaving some scholars to date the work earlier than 55-56AD because in 55AD Nero had already arranged the secret poisoning of Britannicus, his step-brother by adoption (Dio Cass. 61.7.4; Suet. *Ner.* 33.2-3; Tac. *Ann.* 13.15-7). I accept the original dating because, while Seneca would not have been ignorant of the murder, the emperor's role may not have been widely known. For the difficulties in dating *Clem.*, see Griffin (1976, 1992) pp. 407-11; Braund (2009) pp. 16-7.

to anger and its management as well as its emphasis that *ira* is a quality unbecoming for an emperor king. While the work is dedicated to advising Nero how to rule, it is also useful in offering a positive alternative to *ira* and will be considered to be so. Furthermore, *De Ira* and *De Clementia* are important philosophical works for the inspiration of better conduct and the revision of values and attitudes. Despite their differences, when exploring anger, these texts complement each other and there is great value in studying them alongside one another because they consolidate the nature of passions and offer alternative ways to behave.

The famous myth provides the background for Seneca's tragedy *Medea*. Following Jason's acquisition of the Golden Fleece (after completing seemingly impossible tasks with assistance from Princess Medea's magic), the couple flee from Colchis with her younger brother Absyrtus. To distract her father, Aeëtes, who was pursuing them, Medea butchers her brother and scatters his limbs across the sea. Pelias' son banishes Jason and Medea following their exile from Iolcus after rejuvenating Jason's father, Aeson and then killing Pelias. The couple escape to Corinth where Medea bears two sons and Jason later abandons her to marry the Corinthian princess, Creusa. Seneca's play *Medea* is set on Jason's wedding day and tells the story of Medea's angry revenge on Jason for his abandonment. She retaliates by killing the new bride with a poisoned robe and crown which burns Creusa's flesh and King Creon dies in the fire while trying to save his daughter. Medea's vengeance continues with the murder of her sons and she escapes on her Sun God grandfather's chariot which is drawn by winged dragons. My study focuses on the nature and consequences of Medea's anger, exploring the possibility of whether, if she understood the nature of the passion and with guidance, she may not have reacted as she did.

The play *Thyestes* relates to the myth of the House of Pelops in Argos, renowned for generations of violence including that of the son of Zeus, Tantalus, who serves up his son Pelops at a divine banquet. According to mythology, revived by Zeus, Pelops marries a princess (after defeating her

father in a chariot race by sabotaging his competitor's chariot), and becomes king. He causes conflict between his sons, Atreus and Thyestes, and on his death, the initial plans for joint kingship (or alternate rule) are regularly broken with the brothers enduring cycles of prosperity and exile. For example, at one point when Atreus is king, Thyestes seduces his brother's wife, Aerope, and steals the golden ram, which is the symbol of power. This drives Atreus into exile and starts a civil war as a result of which he regains power and expels Thyestes from the kingdom. Seneca's play opens with Atreus in power, preparing for entrapment of his brother through feigned desire for reconciliation and joint kingship. In reality, Atreus is seeking vengeance for Thyestes' treachery. Thyestes returns from exile to become a victim of crimes which far surpass his original slight, as he is served his sons in a banquet. Atreus' personality and attitudes are analysed in the context of his anger, with a view to establishing how there may have been an alternative outcome had he been able to manage his feelings.

Summary of chapters and their arguments

Chapter One establishes Seneca's place within the Stoic theory of passions by considering the extent to which he can be perceived to be following orthodox doctrines and how he was influenced by later thinkers, such as Posidonius. It begins by presenting the commonly accepted definition of passions according to Stoicism, presents understandings of assent, causes, impulses, beliefs and judgements and considers the effect of *adfectus* on the mind. This requires consideration of the views about passions, particularly the role of judgements, held by the School's founder Zeno, his successor Chrysippus and the perceived deviations by Posidonius. The chapter addresses how Seneca responds to his predecessors' views and synthesises existing work by considering the way in which he advances philosophical doctrines, particularly those relating to the formation of passions.

Chapter Two present Seneca's definition of anger in *De Ira* and *De Clementia* to provide a comprehensive overview of the subject which forms the central focus of my research and themes which will be referred to in later

chapters. These works provide opportunity for Seneca to revise traditional understandings of *ira* and *clementia*, with the conclusion that the former is unacceptable and must be expelled and the latter involves mildness connected with *humanitas* and goodness of soul. This chapter outlines the Stoic definition of passions with particular focus on anger, summarising its stages, causes, physical presentation, characteristics and consequences. Stoic perceptions of anger are compared with those of Aristotle and the Epicurean approach in general. The chapter affirms that Seneca follows a Stoic view that anger is uncontrollable and is an instance of insanity and refutes other philosophical views of anger as being useful and present in a good soul. Alongside this, I outline the presentation of anger in the tragedies *Medea* and *Thyestes* in relation to how *ira* is defined in Seneca's prose works.

Chapter Three asks how anger's extirpation can be achieved, according to the advice Seneca offers in his moral essays which provide techniques to do this. I draw on the suggestions in *De Ira* about how to prevent anger from arising by examining the role of education, 'spiritual exercises' (in the form of '*preparation for adversity/prae meditatio malorum*', acting 'fate permitting/*deo volente*', '*self-reflection/recognitio*', and taking the 'view from above') and changing habits, values, behaviours and attitudes towards other people.¹⁸² I also outline practical approaches, such as not inviting anger, resisting it at its first stages and delaying responses, as well as considering the social responsibility to cure other people. Throughout the discussion of the cures, I will consider whether they have philosophical origins, whether they depend on adopting Stoic doctrines or if they are practical, non-philosophical solutions or if they are a combination of both by

¹⁸² *Prae meditatio malorum* is used by Cicero not Seneca (who only uses '*praemeditor*' in *Ep.* 107.4) but will be used as an apt Latin phrase for the technique of rehearsing the future. These practices of self-reflection to increase self-awareness have been termed 'spiritual exercises' by modern theorists. For example, Hadot (1995, 2003) argues that: 'Thus, all spiritual exercises are, fundamentally, a return to the self, in which the self is liberated from the state of alienation into which it has been plunged by worries, passions, and desires. The 'self' liberated in this way is no longer merely our egoistic, passionate individuality: it is our *moral* person, open to universality and objectivity, and participating in universal nature or thought' (p. 103). I adopt this term to refer to the mental exercises advocated by Seneca and his predecessors because they refer to the care of the soul which involves understanding and practicing philosophical tenets.

critiquing their feasibility and likelihood of success as remedies for passions. The chapter concludes that the subjectivity of anger means that there is no universal method for curing it, but that, with commitment, it is still possible to select appropriate techniques for the circumstances and individual character to help overcome passions. These conclusions will be borne in mind during the consideration of Medea and Thyestes' likelihood of reformation through philosophy in Chapter Five.

Chapter Four presents the Stoic elements pertinent to passions and those which reveal the characters' attitudes in Seneca's tragedies *Medea* and *Thyestes* to establish the extent to which philosophy is present in the plays. It explores the anti-Stoic interpretation of Seneca's plays at the same time as considering why philosophy is so prevalent in Seneca's plays and how his dramatic terminology reflects his moral theory. I outline the Stoic attitude towards poetry and consider themes such as power in terms of kingship and tyranny, exile, death, the role of fate, the old order of the gods and the Stoic God in human affairs and the perceived perversion of nature compared with a Stoic perspective. By considering philosophical ideas beyond the scope of anger, I will be able to examine how the socio-political environment in which the protagonists live is shaped by their world-views. The discussion about Stoic themes in the tragedies serves to demonstrate how Seneca's attitudes towards passions are communicated through his use of established Stoic topics and how the characters' views of how their world works is impacted by their dominance by *adfectus*.

Chapter Five asks whether Medea and Atreus reflect a Stoic perspective and how they would benefit by adopting a philosophical outlook. This problem is answered by considering possible audience responses to what has been seen or read, considering the importance of playing 'roles' for the characters, as well as highlighting how their personalities impact on the action and contribute to the philosophical themes of the plays to reinforce the view that Stoic techniques are beneficial to extirpate anger. I proceed to explore the presence of the techniques proposed to cure anger in *De Ira* within the plays and whether the characters do or should take steps to cure

their anger. The chapter concludes that any perceived Stoicism in the characters is temporary, that philosophical attitudes are adopted for personal gain and the constraints of the dramatic genre prevent the tragic characters from curing their anger. I recognise that despite the benefits of philosophy, the dramas by definition would not allow any improvement in the characters' attitudes and behaviours. However, by interpreting the characters as *exempla*, an audience can learn about the need to address their failings to prevent a decline into further vices.

To conclude, I will summarise the findings of my principal research questions, establishing Seneca's place in the Stoic tradition and the extent to which anger's management depends on Stoic theory. When considering the role of Stoicism in Seneca's writing, I will consider how useful the texts I have selected are in educating his reader and audience about passions. I end with the argument that practising Stoic techniques can help remove the negative impact of *adfectus*, and with the correct application of philosophy, men can enjoy *tranquillitas*.

Chapter One

Seneca and the Stoic psychology of passions

The aim in this chapter is to consider how Seneca's writing responds to the views of his predecessors and for that reason I am considering the commonly accepted definition of passions according to many Stoics, the conflicting views about the role of judgements, and the views of Posidonius. Passions are considered in terms of sicknesses of the mind, whether they can be stopped by identifying pre-passions, whether feelings are ever acceptable and how they can be replaced with acceptable alternatives. Throughout this discussion, I seek to place Seneca's views of passion in relation to those of Stoics within the framework of Early and Middle Stoa doctrines and consider his responses to these in order to determine the extent to which his thinking is independent from the main Stoic doctrine. This is achieved by examining Seneca's orthodoxy on the relationship between passion and reason. The chapter concludes that Seneca adopts a largely orthodox view, with modifications and innovations to develop the doctrines.

Stoic passions/adfectus

Traditionally, Stoics considered the mind to be unified (unlike Plato and Aristotle's views of rational and irrational parts). Zeno is reported to differ from the 'ancients' by dismissing a tripartite soul because he believed that mental processes are the result of physical changes within the central commanding faculty (*hegemonikon/principale animi*) and not movements within the appetitive or desiderative parts of the soul (Cic. *Acad.* 1.39).¹⁸³ Later, Posidonius reverted to a Platonic style view of the soul divided into parts, as will be discussed below when I consider the extent to which Posidonius was heterodox.¹⁸⁴ According to many Stoics, the soul is

¹⁸³ Cf. Plut. *Mor.* 446F-7A.

¹⁸⁴ Galen suggested that in *On the Soul/Peri Psuches* Chrysippus took a Platonic view but later dismissed this thought (Gal. *PHP* 4.1.5-17). I will accept the view of a unified soul which Chrysippus predominately advocated elsewhere, such as in his *On Affections/Peri Pathon* (Gal. *PHP* 4.1.14).

corporeal and is obedient to the laws of physics (Cleanthes *apud* Nem. *De Nat. hom.* 21).¹⁸⁵ It is comprised of the *pneuma/anima*, a hot, breath-like substance (cf. Cic. *Tusc.* 1.42; Diog. Laert. 7.157), which permeates every part of the human body, to the extent that it interacts with the body and responds to its suffering (Cleanthes *apud* Nemesius *De Nat. hom.* 21.6-9).¹⁸⁶ Chrysippus defined the soul as ‘*the pneuma connate with us, extending as a continuum through the whole body as long as the free-flowing breath of life is present in the body*’ (Gal. *PHP* 3.1.10).¹⁸⁷ The way in which the substance of the soul relates to the ethical strand of Stoicism is because how the *anima* is cared for and the level of awareness of the causes of changes affects the extent to which feelings can be controlled and mental well-being maintained.

As *anima* is identical to God, who is omnipresent, man has a part of God within him which requires appropriate care and attention or worship, through perfecting one’s reason and extirpating passions and other obstacles which evoke irrational thinking and behaviours (Diog. Laert. 7.137-8). *Anima* also constitutes an individual’s psychic qualities: he is virtuous when his soul is in a certain state of correct tension.¹⁸⁸ When healthy, the soul is in this state of correct tension, whereas a passion, such as pleasure, is an unreasonable ‘swelling’ at something that seems to be choice-worthy (Diog. Laert. 7.114). By describing passions as ‘movements’ in the soul, a Stoic perspective captures the essence of a psychophysical relationship between the physical and mental aspects of man, as well as acknowledging the fact that humans ‘feel’ and are pained by passions indicating that these causes of pain should be addressed and removed (cf. 1.1.3-5).

A common Stoic view of passions is presented as follows:

They [the Stoics] say that passion is impulse which is

¹⁸⁵ Cf. Long (1982) and (2005) pp. 560-72.

¹⁸⁶ Cf. *SVF* 2.444; *SVF* 2.448; Tert. *De anim.* 5.

¹⁸⁷ Cf. Cf. Diog. Laert. 7.156; Gould (1970) pp. 126-37.

¹⁸⁸ Cf. Gal. *PHP* 4.6.1-6. Cf. Diog. Laert. 7.158; Plut. *De Stoic. rep.* 1034D; Stob. *Ecl.* 2.7.5b4; *SVF* 2.451; *SVF* 3.473.

*excessive and disobedient to the dictates of reason or a movement of soul which is irrational and contrary to nature; and that all passions belong to the soul's commanding faculty. Therefore every fluttering is also a passion, and likewise, every passion is a fluttering. Since passion is of this kind, one must suppose that some passions are primary and dominant, while others have these as their reference. The generically primary ones are these four: appetite, fear, distress, pleasure. Appetite and fear come first, the former in relation to what appears good, and the latter in relation to what appears bad. Pleasure and distress result from these: pleasure, whenever we get the objects of our appetite or avoid the objects of our fear; distress, whenever we fail to get the objects of our appetite or experience the objects of our fear.*¹⁸⁹

(Stob. *Ecl.* 2.88.8-89.3 (SVF 3.378)).

The four primary *adfectūs* are appetite or desire, fear, distress or pain, and pleasure or delight. Pleasure and pain are considered to be subordinate passions which arise as a result of the (mistaken) seeking or avoidance of good and bad as directed by appetite and fear: they are not associated with bodily sensations. Passions are further divided into subcategories, according to which anger is part of desire because it involves a desire for revenge.¹⁹⁰ The unpredictable and periodic nature of passions is reflected by the common description of them being a '*fluttering/ptoia*' in which the stirring up or 'ruffling' of the soul that produces oscillations of the mind which are too rapid to notice, is likened to the movement of a bird.¹⁹¹ Flutterings are the '*ease with which the capacity for emotion is activated — To eukineton tou pathetikou*' (Stob. *Ecl.* 2.7.1 (SVF 1.206))¹⁹² and Chrysippus explained how they move people '*by chance*' through trivial causes (Gal. *PHP* 4.5.6).

¹⁸⁹ Translated by LS (1987) 65A pp. 410-1. Cf. Price (1994) pp. 146-9.

¹⁹⁰ Cf. Cic. *Tusc.* 3.11; Stob. *Ecl.* 2.90.19-91.9 (SVF 3.394, part).

¹⁹¹ Cf. Zeno (SVF 1.206); Chrysippus (Gal. *PHP* 4.5.6); Stob. *Ecl.* 2.7.10.

¹⁹² Translated by Graver (2007) p. 118.

In *Peri Pathon*, Chrysippus defined passions in relation to reason, compared with Zeno who considered them to be without reason and judgement, which he considered to be man's natural guide (Gal. *PHP* 4.2.10).¹⁹³ Passions involve reason because they are formed by mental activities which originate from the commanding faculty, but they are not rational themselves because they conquer reasonable judgements. Chrysippus explained how passions are 'excessive impulses/pleonazousai hormai' (cf. Diog. Laert. 7.110).¹⁹⁴ A man can be 'pushed too much' in 'disobedience to reason' (Chrysippus *Peri Psuches apud* Gal. *PHP* 4.2.11), where excess relates to 'having deviated too far from the consistency of nature — *qui longius discesserit a naturae constantia*' i.e. going beyond the limits of reason's control and thus what is natural (Cic. *Tusc.* 4.11).¹⁹⁵ Chrysippus defined irrationality as being 'disobedient to reason and rejecting it' and distinguished it from error, which he considered to be a rational 'misapprehension' (Gal. *PHP* 4.2.12).¹⁹⁶ Instead, errors are 'faulty judgements and reason that has been mistaken about the truth and has erred' (Gal. *PHP* 4.2.24).¹⁹⁷

Assent

For beliefs to form and actions to be carried out, a *sense impression/phantasia/species* must be presented to the mind in the form of a proposition. It must then be acknowledged to be real by evaluating or *giving assent/sunkatathesis/assensio* to the proposition (an internal cause).¹⁹⁸ Zeno explained passions, and by extension the Stoic theory of action, as a combination of four modifications of the governing part of the soul: impressions, assent, cognition and knowledge (reported by Cic. *Acad.* 1.40-1).¹⁹⁹ Seneca explains the process as a temporal sequence of becoming stirred by an external impression, followed by an impulse which

¹⁹³ For Zeno's view see Gal. *PHP* 4.2.6, 5.1.4.

¹⁹⁴ Cf. Gould (1970) pp. 181-96.

¹⁹⁵ Cf. Gal. *PHP* 4.4.32-4, 4.5.13-5.

¹⁹⁶ Cf. Gal. *PHP* 4.4.16-7, 21-9, 4.5.17-8.

¹⁹⁷ Cf. Gal. *PHP* 4.2.24-7, 5.4.14; Cic. *Off.* 1.136; Hankinson (1993) pp. 189, 192ff.

¹⁹⁸ Cf. Arthur (1983) pp. 69-78.

¹⁹⁹ Zeno offers a visual presentation of these mental processes in terms of a closing fist to communicate how mental states have corporeal origin (Cic. *Acad.* 2.145). Cf. Ioppolo (1990) pp. 435-6; Gill (2005) p. 453; Long (2005) pp. 572-80.

is confirmed by assent and describes this with the example of walking.²⁰⁰ Types of assent depend on the individual's moral character and the 'health' of his soul.²⁰¹ Only the epitome of moral perfection, the Stoic Sage, knows true impressions and, through 'strong' assent, converts these into 'knowledge' that cannot be overruled by rational challenges.²⁰² This is because his thoughts arise from kataleptic impressions which are infallible because they come from what is and they are stamped, sealed and moulded like a wax tablet.²⁰³

A Sage will delay his response and withhold assent, acting with reservation to ensure that the impulses he follows are consistent with correct reason and natural/divine law.²⁰⁴ He makes the decision to act '*fate permitting/deo volente*' accepting fate's powers, avoiding disappointment and remaining unperturbed if his success is thwarted by it, which Seneca discusses using the example of considering whether to sail or seek political positions (*Tranq.* 13.2-3).²⁰⁵ Everyone else is a 'fool' and classified as 'mad' by Stoics (*Ben.* 2.35.2)²⁰⁶ as they do not have true knowledge because they assent to non-grasping impressions which cause 'opinions' (cf. *Ep.* 71.24).²⁰⁷ This 'weak' assent involves assent without proper justification and is hasty and precipitate (*SVF* 3.172).²⁰⁸

Causes and impulses

Once the impression has been approved, the individual is motivated by *impulse/horme/impetus*. This type of impulse is more sophisticated than an animalistic instinct because its existence depends on the rational activity of

²⁰⁰ For the possibility of Seneca's deviation from Chrysippus' theory of action as a state of the *hegemonikon*, see Rist (1989) pp. 1999-2003. Cf. *SVF* 3.169.

²⁰¹ Cf. *Gal. PHP* 4.6.5-6; *Gell. NA* 7.2.6-13 (*SVF* 2.1000).

²⁰² Cf. *Ep.* 71.32; *Cic. Acad.* 2.57; *Diog. Laert.* 7.45-6, 7.121; *Stob. Ecl.* 2.7.5l, 2.73.19-23.

²⁰³ Cf. *Cic. Acad.* 2.77; *Sext. Emp. Math.* 7.228-30, 7.373; *Annas* (1980); *Ioppolo* (1990) p. 433; *Brennan* (2005) pp. 53, 64-79.

²⁰⁴ Cf. *Wildberger* (2006) pp. 79-80. The Sage's qualities are widely discussed in ancient literature cf. *Cic. Fin.* 3.29; *Cic. Tusc.* 4.37-8; *Diog. Laert.* 7.117-25; *Stob. Ecl.* 2.7.11g, 2.7.11m.

²⁰⁵ Cf. *Stob. Ecl.* 2.155.5f. (*SVF* 3.564). For acting 'fate permitting' as a therapy for passions, see pp. 143-4.

²⁰⁶ Cf. *Cic. Tusc.* 3.10, 4.54.

²⁰⁷ Cf. *Tranq.* 12.5; *Diog. Laert.* 7.124; *Sext. Emp. Math.* 7.151-2.

²⁰⁸ Cf. *Graver* (2007) p. 65.

assent (and therefore it is a rational impulse) and because of how it ‘moves’ the soul towards elation or contraction, which commands action (Plut. *De Stoic. rep.* 1037F).²⁰⁹ These ‘alterations’ in the governing part of the soul are the result of external impressions and how sense-organs interpret and respond to them (cf. Stob. *Ecl.* 2.79 (86W)).²¹⁰ Chrysippus argued that two causes are responsible for action: ‘some causes are perfect and principal, others are auxiliary and proximate — *aliae sunt perfectae et principales, aliae adiuuantes et proximae*’ (Cic. *Fat.* 41).²¹¹ The principal cause is the individual’s mental character, i.e., his beliefs. From this Cicero concluded that Chrysippus too believed that assent occurs only as a result of a response to an impression (Cic. *Fat.* 42).²¹² Seneca agrees that action can only be carried out with an impulse and therefore only living things experience this (*Ep.* 113.2). He follows his predecessor when he declares that anger only occurs after the mind approves because it requires the impression of injury and the desire to avenge it for it to arise (2.1.4).

Seneca presents the early Stoic views about the problem of propositions and how the mind assents to sensations perceived by the body in his example of the process involved in identifying a man and horse moving (*Ep.* 117.13).²¹³ From this he seeks to demonstrate how assent and the movements of the soul occur across two stages, cognitive then linguistic, and it is in this way that thoughts and responses to impressions are formed. It is the language element of this process which distinguishes these mental

²⁰⁹ Cf. Andron. *SVF* 3.391; Price (2005) p. 472.

²¹⁰ These swellings and contractions have aptly been termed ‘embodiments of intentions’ which reinforces the physical impact of human thought (Price (2005) p. 474).

²¹¹ Translated by Rackham (1942) p. 237. The state of affairs was aptly described by Chrysippus’ cylinder analogy in which he stated there are two forces at work when the cylinder rolls down the hill. Firstly, the external cause, a push (one of the ‘*adiuantes et proximae*’ causes) sets the cylinder in motion which is followed by the internal cause, the property of roundness (one of the ‘*perfectae et principales*’ causes), which keeps it rolling (cf. Gell. *NA* 7.2.7-11; Plut. *De Stoic. rep.* 1056b-57c). In man, the decision to act in response to an impression is the result of an auxiliary and proximate cause while the agent’s psychological character and his soul’s disposition is the perfect and principal cause which is where the main responsibility lies (Sedley (1993) pp. 322). Cf. Sedley (1993) pp. 322-4; Sellars (2003, 2009) p. 83. For Posidonius’ dissatisfaction with other Stoics, in particular Chrysippus’ incomplete account of the causes of passions, see Gal. *PHP* 4.7.19-23; Strabo 2.3.8; *SVF* 2.937; Kidd (1971) pp. 204, 206, 210-1. For further details about Stoic views of fate, see pp. 178, 197-8.

²¹² Cf. Plut. *De Stoic. rep.* 1057A (*SVF* 3.177, part).

²¹³ Cf. Ioppolo (1990) pp. 445-6.

processes in humans from animals, and by extension explains why beasts do not experience passions. Seneca agrees with Chrysippus that the intellectual component of passions exempts animals from having them as they are not affected by or feel injustice at slights in the way humans do, nor do they have a concept of morality (1.3.4).²¹⁴ Beasts' fierce expressions, such as wild boars foaming at the mouth, bulls tossing their horns and pawing the ground, lions roaring, snakes puffing up their necks and mad dogs having a sullen look (1.1.6) are merely impulses sparked by attempts at self-preservation rather than the desire for vengeance following injury which is indicative of anger (1.3.6). Seneca's example of a man and horse moving also demonstrates how the Stoic theory of action and psychology encompasses all three branches of their theory as opposed to being focused solely on ethics. The relation between impulses and language represents their logic and the movements in the soul their physics doctrine.²¹⁵ To emphasise the distinction between man and beast, Seneca frequently compares angry people with animals to show the baseness of the passion.²¹⁶

Pre-passions

Chrysippus explained that man has an '*inner awareness of the affections of the mind happening to them*' through a feeling in the heart (Gal. *PHP* 3.1.25. Cf. Gal. *PHP* 2.2.7-9). He believed that distress is accompanied by pain felt in the heart and fear with palpitations, neither of which are affections in themselves (Gal. *PHP* 2.8.4, 18, 3.5.37-41).²¹⁷ Cicero adopted these terms when he describes the effect of distress as '*a kind of biting pain/quasi morsum*' (Cic. *Tusc.* 4.15). He referred to how '*poverty bites/paupertas momordit*' and '*disgrace stings/ignominia pupugit*' (Cic. *Tusc.* 3.82) and how even for the Sage, in whom passions do not arise, he will still feel a '*bite/morsus*' and a '*slight contraction/contractiuncula*' in the mind both of which are natural experiences (Cic. *Tusc.* 3.83). Posidonius offered a

²¹⁴ Cf. 1.3.7-8; 3.27.2; *Ep.* 124; *Marc.* 5.1; Cic. *Tusc.* 4.31; Gal. *PHP* 4.5.4, 5.1.10, 5.6.37.

²¹⁵ Cf. Gill (2005) pp. 444-55. For the interconnectedness of the branches of Stoic philosophy, see pp. 16-7.

²¹⁶ For discussions about the bestiality of anger, see pp. 92, 108-9, 127, 207.

²¹⁷ Cf. Price (2005) p. 475.

variant account of these sensations.²¹⁸ His understanding of ‘bitings’ was to be ‘*physical with mental effects*’ (Plut. *De lib. et aegr.* 4-6 (fr. 154 EK)).²¹⁹ They are distinguished from mental events, i.e., judgments and passion, and from physical manifestations of passions, such as trembling and the like. He called these affective movements of excitement or feelings before an impulse ‘*emotive tugs/pathētikai holkaī*’ which are involuntary, do not necessarily progress into passions and are controllable by preventing them from arising (through diet and music) and by recognising them so that reason is allowed to prevail.²²⁰

The terms biting and pangs found in Chrysippus and the idea that passions can be stopped from arising by appropriately responding to sensations, were developed by Seneca into the concept of ‘*pre-passions*’ or ‘*first movements*’ (*propatheiai/principia proludentia adfectibus*), which are the prompting of the mind to respond.²²¹ They are immediate physical responses which happen before judgements are formed about the impression and are uncontrollable and unavoidable. To Seneca, these are ‘*blows*’ or ‘*initial mental jolts/primus ille ictus animi*’ (2.2.2) of which he gives a series of examples including shivering, hair standing on end, blushing and dizziness from heights (2.2.1. Cf. 2.3.1-3).²²² Seneca refers to ‘*inevitable pangs/necessarius morsus*’ of grief (*Marc.* 7.1. Cf. *Ep.* 63.1), saying that this is a ‘*mere sting/morsus*’ which only becomes pain when it is thought to be

²¹⁸ Cf. Sorabji (2007a) pp. 167ff.

²¹⁹ Translated by Kidd (1999) p. 207.

²²⁰ Cf. Gal. *PHP* 4.7.7, 28, 5.1.5, 5.21, 26, 29-35, 6.19-20; Cooper (1998) pp. 87-90; Gill (1998) pp. 125-9; Armstrong (2008) pp. 83, 88-9, 102.

²²¹ Holler (1934) observes how, because *propatheiai* is not found in Galen it may not have been in Posidonius at all or not in his *On the Passions*. The other possible explanations for this include Posidonius’ occasional use of the term in a comparison of the ‘*emotive tug*’ with illness but not yet as an independent psychological term or that it was used in a psychological sense but not yet as a definite term or that it was already used by Posidonius in the same way as in the Church Fathers. Holler is correct in excluding the first and last possibilities and alerting attention to the fact that *propatheia* is not used by the medical writers. He identifies that the oldest instances of the term are psychological, and Stoic, found in Philo, *frag. Gen.* IV.26 and the use of the related verb *propaschein* in Cleanthes *frag.* 36. His conclusion that it was the followers of Sextius who developed *propatheia* into a technical term supports my view that Seneca was the first to fully develop the idea of the concept in relation to the formation of passions (pp. 68-70). Cf. Cooper (1998) pp. 85-6; Sorabji (1998) pp. 149-50 and (2000) esp. pp. 66-75; Veyne (2003) pp. 102-6; Sorabji (2007a) pp. 167-70; Wilson (2014) p. 95.

²²² Cf. *Ep.* 11; 57.3-6; 71.29; 99.15ff.

so (*Ep.* 99.13) and that life without a '*mental pang/morsus animi*' is ignorance of half of nature (*Prov.* 4.1), all demonstrating how these are involuntary and natural.²²³

Seneca agrees that pre-passions cannot be stopped by reason from arising (2.2.1) and as a consequence they have no moral culpability. He introduces the idea that they are submissive to reason once in existence (cf. 2.4.2). This means that there is the opportunity to avoid the disastrous consequences of succumbing to a passion (2.3.4). In the case of anger, the primary disturbance of the mind is excited by the impression of injury and the impression of injury itself is not anger (2.3.1. Cf. 2.1.4). By choosing to assent to it, the individual becomes overwhelmed by *ira*, feels the physiological disturbance it causes his body (1.1.3-5) and loses rational control over thoughts and actions, like a man thrown from the rocks who has no control over his limbs or the speed at which he falls (1.7.4). This is why Seneca encourages stopping pre-passions such as the '*initial prickings of anger/primum inritamentum irae*' and '*fight it at its first sparks/ipsisque repugnare seminibus*' when they are first experienced and not succumbing to assent (1.8.1).

Beliefs

Beliefs are thoughts in the immediate present and are events, which, depending on the authenticity of the impression, are true or false. The old Stoics define the passions relating to the present in terms of '*fresh opinion/prosphatos doxa/recens opinio*' because it relates to the judgement which is perceived to be correct about the circumstances, i.e., that they are good or bad (cf. Gal. *PHP* 4.2.1-2; Cic. *Tusc.* 4.14). Freshness of a belief forms a significant part of Zeno's understanding of passions, not only referring to a recent occurrence but for as long as it impacts upon the individual (Cic. *Tusc.* 3.75). Arius Didymus explained '*fresh*' in physical terms, relating it to the effect of passions on the body when he claimed that

²²³ Seneca also notes Stoics and Epicureans differ over their view of 'bites' – for the Epicureans they are genuine passions; for Stoics, they are preliminary feelings to passions, an '*initial mental shock/ictus animi*' (2.2.2). Cf. Tsouna (2007a) pp. 44-51 and (2011) pp. 199-200.

it is '*the stimulus of an irrational contraction or expansion*' (Stob. *Ecl.* 2.88.22-89.3 (SVF 3.378)).²²⁴

For many Stoics, passions involve two distinct value judgements. The first is based on whether something is thought to be good/beneficial or bad/harmful in terms of an individual's *flourishing/eudaimonia/summum bonum* (cf. *Ep.* 31.8; Sext. *Emp. Math.* 11.30).²²⁵ This is genuine happiness, a stable, enduring contentment, not fleeting happiness at temporary positive experience, according to what appears to be good or bad in the present and future (cf. *Ep.* 113.18).²²⁶ In the case of *ira*, it would be the judgement that someone has done something harmful or caused injury. The second judgement concerns whether it is '*appropriate for me/kathēkei moi/oportere/rectum est/ad officium pertinet*' to act in such a way according to individual evaluations.²²⁷ The nature of anger is such that this second judgement involves the belief that it is not only appropriate to respond but necessary to do so. *Adfectus* are personal because they involve the attachment of subjective value to an item or person and are flawed evaluations which lead man to pursue vices, not genuine 'goods', which are synonymous with virtue and are necessary for a good life. Anger is counterproductive: it disturbs reason to such an extent that it produces irrational behaviour, preventing the angry person from functioning constructively (even when he may wrongly believe that his responses are necessary).

Assent has ethical significance because it is the acceptance of propositions as being true that causes action and this is determined by the individual's moral character, existing beliefs and values, his upbringing, life experience and schooling (cf. Cic. *Fat.* 39-43). Assent is voluntary and that which is '*up to us*' or '*within our power/eph' hēmin*', which Cicero translated as '*in nostra*

²²⁴ Translated by LS (1987) 65C p. 411. Cf. Graver (2002) pp. 117-9. By contrast, Posidonius refuted Chrysippus' references to temporal beliefs and believed 'fresh opinion' should be removed from the definition, proposing instead that distress is an opinion of the presence of great, intolerable and unbearable evil (Gal. *PHP* 4.7.1-5).

²²⁵ Cf. Gass (2000).

²²⁶ Cf. Cic. *Tusc.* 3.24-5, 4.16-22; Diog. Laert. 7.110; Stob. *Ecl.* 2.7.10b.

²²⁷ Cf. Cic. *Tusc.* 3.61, 3.74, 3.76, 3.79; Stob. *Ecl.* 2.7.9; Kidd (1978) pp. 247-50. Sorabji (2000) p. 30.

potestate' (Cic. *Tusc.* 4.4) and Seneca conveys through '*voluntate et iudicio*' (2.3.5).²²⁸ Humans only have control over their mental activities (their judgements, perceptions, memory, imagination, attitudes, beliefs, thoughts, knowledge, desires, choices and value system, words and tone of voice and intentions such as desires and aversions) and their actions. Everything else (such as body, material possessions, reputation and status, the past and the future) is 'indifferent' in that it is beyond man's control and it does not impact on either well-being or the pursuit of virtue (cf. Epict. *Ench.* 1.1). This explains why, from a Stoic perspective, externals have no value to human well-being, particularly because they can be affected by events outside of man's control. It is for this reason that emphasis is placed on ensuring that assent is appropriate and reason is followed, not passions, when considering what is choice-worthy, so that the correct selection/deselection of 'things' are made (cf. Stob. *Ecl.* 2.76.9-15).

Consequently, it is in assent that moral responsibility (and accountability) lie.²²⁹ An impression can be responded to in one of three ways; it can be rejected, or be indifferent to, or accepted and assented to.²³⁰ Assent is the basis of human autonomy which distinguishes a virtuous and an unvirtuous man (cf. Stob. *Ecl.* 2.7.11g, k, 2.9f.). Cleanthes described the nature of the good as being '*Well-ordered, just, holy, pious, self-controlled, useful, honourable, due, austere, candid, always useful, fearless, undistressed, profitable, unpaired, beneficial, contented, secure, friendly, precious... consistent, fair-famed, unpretentious, caring, gentle, keen, faultless, permanent*' (Clem. Al. *Protr.* 1.54.18-55.4 (SVF 1.557)).²³¹ A virtuous man is conscientious in his pursuit of reason and perseveres even in challenging situations. He enjoys a detached appreciation of the moment and remains calm under pressure. He does not become angry or succumb to other passions because he is governed by reason. He overcomes basic instincts

²²⁸ Cf. Strange (2004, 2010). Man's relationship with fate and his degree of control is aptly captured in the observation made by Inwood (1985) that: 'Man is a rational animal, by fate. Thus, fate acts in man through his reason. The way reason controls or causes action is through assent' (p. 67).

²²⁹ Cf. Graver (2002) for the argument that assent is the 'locus of responsibility' (p. 86).

²³⁰ Cf. Nussbaum (1987) pp. 146-8.

²³¹ Translated by LS (1987) 60Q p. 373.

and desires, so that he consistently performs actions correctly, does what is necessary regardless of popularity or ease and thus he flourishes in all projects. Being consistent is a part of being focused and not being distracted by passions or making ill-informed decisions or following poor advice.²³² His wisdom and self-sufficiency secure him against adversity. He lives in harmony with himself, society and the universe so that he promotes the well-being of other people and contributes to society despite enduring any hardship or persecution.

In contrast, the negative characteristics of man largely focus on poor interpersonal skills with the promotion of self-interest. Such lack of virtue prevents appropriate social participation and produces an inability to fulfil one's role in society. An unvirtuous man is dishonest, selfish, self-obsessed, lacks compassion and is invariably envious and greedy, with a cruel temper combined with arrogance, prejudice and spitefulness (cf. Stob. *Ecl.* 2.7.11g). This is because he is driven by passions as opposed to reason and lacks the rationality which is being able to correct mistaken beliefs. Whether the Stoic definition of virtue is accepted or not, the intrinsic qualities from which they believe virtue to be composed are admirable. Most people would agree that being angry and being in the presence of angry people is unpleasant and should be avoided (cf. 3.9.3, 3.37.1).²³³ Just, wise, brave and calm people are not only preferable company but the type of person that should be preferred to be.

There are three ways in which passions are mistakes: (i) they are errors in reasoning, (ii) errors in the incorrect ascription of value and (iii) can spark further passions with their specific dangers.²³⁴ The presence of passions prevents correctly responding to impressions and following right reason, which, according to Chrysippus, among others, is identical to divine reason (Diog. Laert. 7.88). It is this that humans have been designed by nature to follow and obey and in doing so, become the ideal person (Diog. Laert. 7.88-

²³² For the importance of consistency in character, see pp. 33, 224ff.

²³³ Cf. *Ep.* 5.2-3; 7; 25.7; 123.6-9.

²³⁴ As defined by Sellars (2006) p. 118.

9).²³⁵ Putting aside the issue of a divided soul, which will be discussed below, when Posidonius defined passions in terms of the relation to following right (or divine) reason, rejecting inconsistent opinions and being guided by the inner *daimon*, his views reflected those of early Stoics who believed that problems are encountered when god's wishes and divine law/reason are not adhered to. Posidonius explained how with passions, man is '*sometimes turning aside with the worst and beastlike [parts of themselves] and being swept along.*' Those who experience passions fail to recognise the importance of '*consistency*' and that '*the primary thing is to be led in no respect by what is both irrational and unhappy and godless in the soul* (Gal. *PHP* 5.6.4-5).²³⁶

Judgements in passions

As I have demonstrated, the orthodox 'cognitive' Stoic view condemned *adfectus* as irrational, harmful disturbances of the soul, motions of the reasoning, governing part of the mind that are based on false judgment (Diog. Laert. 110ff.). However, even among the early Stoics, there was debate about the relationship between passions and judgement.²³⁷ Zeno believed passions to be: '*A movement of the mind contrary to nature and turned away from right reason — *aversa a recta ratione contra naturam animi commotio**' (Cic. *Tusc.* 4.11).²³⁸ They are '*disobedient/apeithes/non obtemperans*' to one's own right reason.²³⁹ Zeno considered passions to be voluntary (with consequent moral responsibility) and people consciously and deliberately reject reason because passions are: '*experienced owing to a judgement of opinion – *opinionis iudicio suscipi**' (Cic. *Acad.* 1.39).²⁴⁰ *Adfectus* are the product of judgements in that they '*supervene*

²³⁵ Cf. *Beat.* 15.4-5; *Ep.* 66.39; 71.16; 76.23; 96.2; *QNat.* 1 pr.6-17; Inwood (1985) pp. 139, 156-65.

²³⁶ Cf. Kidd (1971).

²³⁷ Cf. Cic. *Acad.* 1.39; Diog. Laert. 7.111; Gal. *PHP* 5.1.4; Sorabji (1998); Price (2005); Sellars (2003, 2009) p. 157 n. 51; Tieleman (2003).

²³⁸ Cf. Cic. *Tusc.* 4.47; Diog. Laert. 7.110; Stob. *Ecl.* 2.7.10.

²³⁹ Cf. Cic. *Off.* 1.136; Stob. *Ecl.* 2.88.8.

²⁴⁰ Translated by Rackham (1933, 1956) p. 447. Cf. 1.8, 2.2.2; Cic. *Tusc.* 3.64, 3.83, 4.65, 4.76, 4.82, 4.83.

on/epigignesthai judgements.²⁴¹ Cleanthes generally adhered to the founder's tenets (Diog. Laert. 7.168, 170).²⁴²

In comparison, Chrysippus saw passions as judgements themselves i.e. assent to impressions in which 'mistaken' judgements are made about an indifferent's value and in having these an individual is simultaneously 'turning away' from reason (Diog. Laert. 7.111).²⁴³ He used the analogy of a man running and another walking down a hill to illustrate the impact of passions. The walker can stop immediately, whereas the runner, like the man in the throes of passion who is being 'carried away' and therefore unable to stop what he is feeling and experiencing, cannot halt.²⁴⁴ Zeno and Chrysippus agreed with the key principles in Stoic psychology that passions are a form of impulse, that they are irrational, that they involve evaluations and accompanying feelings from the unnatural psychophysical movements of the unified soul and are not experienced by the wise man.²⁴⁵

The alternative Stoic understanding of passions is 'non-cognitive' and held by Diogenes of Babylon and Posidonius. According to Galen, Posidonius rejected the idea that the passions supervene on judgements or that they are judgements themselves (Gal. *PHP* 4.3.3, 5.1.5).²⁴⁶ He believed

²⁴¹ Cf. Diog. Laert. 7.111; Gal. *PHP* 4.1.17, 4.3.2, 5.1.4, 5.6.42.

²⁴² While they agreed that a presentation of proof was '*an impression on the regent part*', Cleanthes and Chrysippus held different views about what constitutes an impression: the former believed them to be involving '*depression and eminence*' and the latter thought them to be a '*synonym for alteration*' (Sext. *Emp. Math.* 8. 400-2). Translated by Bury (1989) p. 449.

²⁴³ Cf. Gal. *PHP* 4.2.9-12; 4.3.1-2, 24-6, 5.1.4.

²⁴⁴ Cited in Gal. *PHP* 4.2.8; 4.4.14-18, 4.2.28, 43-44, 4.4.24-25, 4.4.30-32; 4.5.13-17, 4.6.354. Cf. 1.7.4, 2.35.2; *Ep.* 40.7.

²⁴⁵ Cf. Zeno in Stob. *Ecl.* 2.7.2 p. 44, 4 (*SVF* 1.205); Chrysippus in Gal. *PHP* 4.2.8, 5.2.1; Plut. *Mor.* 441C. For differences between Zeno and Chrysippus, cf. Gal. *PHP* 4.2.5-6, 5.1.4; Sorabji (2000) pp. 34-6, 55-61. For there being little difference between the philosophers, cf. Inwood (1985) pp. 130-1; Inwood and Donini (1999) p. 699. It is worth noting that Galen complains that '*the most celebrated of the Stoics today*' offer different and changing opinions about the cause of passions: '*sometimes they say that mistaken reasoning and false opinion cause the motions attendant on the affections, but at another time... they retreat from this position and posit certain uncaused motions... After making reason and opinion the cause of the affections, they change to the position that when the soul moves in a certain way without a cause it falls into the affection; and again from this random and uncaused motion they return to the view that the movements of the affections are rational*' (Gal. *PHP* 4.5.1).

²⁴⁶ Cf. Sorabji (2000) pp. 104-5 and (2007a) pp. 163-4.

passions to be movements of spatially separate irrational faculties or capacities of the soul, those of spirited and desiderative powers. For Posidonius, passion is a conviction developed wrongly. In summary, he argued that the first responsibility is to the *logistikon* – if it is strong enough there is no passion; if it is not strong enough *pathetikon* wins. In this respect, the origin of perversion is due to irrational impulses, when reason is disabled and incapable of imposing itself.²⁴⁷ These powers cannot be modified by revising judgements because man's capacity to think is separate from that of desire (Gal. *PHP* 5.7.3).²⁴⁸ Instead, the non-rational requires balancing and harmonising so that there is an understanding of the workings of the faculties through comprehending the soul's powers, habituation of good practices to improve character.²⁴⁹ These problems can be resolved through education which relies on *logistikon* winning against *pathetikon*: difficulties in applying such knowledge depend on the strength of the forces within an individual.

Posidonius cited Cleanthes' dialogue between anger and reason as evidence that the soul is divided (Gal. *PHP* 5.6.34-7) but in doing so, he overlooked the use of poetry as a rhetorical technique not necessarily to be taken literally. Described as a man reared in geometry (Gal. *PHP* 4.4.38) and the most scientific Stoic in terms of his knowledge of the natural physical workings of the world (Gal. *PHP* 8.1.14), Posidonius was particularly interested in demonstrative proofs (Gal. *PHP* 4.4.38) and causes (Gal. *PHP* 5.6.23).²⁵⁰ He argued that passions are caused by two forms of mistakes: the theoretical, born of ignorance, and the practical, as a result of mistaken assumptions or '*emotive tugs/pathētikai holkaî*' which cause assent (cf. Gal. *PHP* 5.6.16-8). He also believed that imagination played a role in causing passions. For example, in the case of fear, one needs a visualisation

²⁴⁷ I agree with Fillion-Lahille's (1984) interpretation of Posidonius' view of passions to be that outlined above (p. 157).

²⁴⁸ Cf. Gal. *PHP* 5.4.3, 6.10. I concur that it is correct to believe that Posidonius did not consider the irrational part of the soul to be inherently 'bad', more that man has a 'less noble part' and one that is shared with animals (Fillion-Lahille (1984) p. 155).

²⁴⁹ Cf. Gal. *PHP* 4.7.24, 41, 5.1.5-6, 4.3, 29, 35. For Posidonius' proposed cures for passions, see pp. 12 n. 11, 136-7, 152-4, 170-1; Veyne (2003) pp. 63-4.

²⁵⁰ Cf. Tieleman (2003) p. 207.

'*phantasia, anazographesis*' of the evil, rather than to be persuaded by reason to evoke the passion (Gal. *PHP* 5.6.23-6). Posidonius rejected the notion that passions involve judgement because this does not explain arousals by wordless music which themselves are not rational, and therefore people must be aroused by the irrational, emotional element of the soul (Gal. *PHP* 5.6.21-2).²⁵¹

More significantly, Posidonius rejected the role of judgements in passions because this does not account for their abatement, where judgements can still be present.²⁵² As a result, he queried Chrysippus' runner analogy because he believed it cannot explain the cause of the excessive conation (Gal. *PHP* 4.3.4-5) in the same way that Galen challenged its plausibility by suggesting that '*there is a power other than reason, irrational by nature*' (Gal. *PHP* 4.2.32) which is responsible for passions in the same way as weight impacts on a runner's motion. He proposed that if passions are caused by reason they can be stopped by will or when the passion ceases but not if they are caused by an irrational power and reason (Gal. *PHP* 4.2.30-8. Cf. Gal. *PHP* 4.5.12).²⁵³ He explained the abatement in terms of a horse analogy in which the running animal is sated by satisfaction from achieving its goal or by exhaustion in the same way that the soul has fulfilled its appetite or has been exhausted by prolonged movements at which point the rider and reason are able to regain control.²⁵⁴ Posidonius could not accept the orthodox view that a Sage was unmoved by that which he holds to be true good i.e. honourable things, particularly when it is these things he seeks, because other men believe it proper and appropriate to be moved affectively by apparent good/evil which they seek/avoid when they are present or approaching them (Gal. *PHP* 4.5.26-7).

²⁵¹ Cf. Sorabji (2007a) pp. 165-6.

²⁵² Cf. Gal. *PHP* 4.7.7-11, 25, 28, 32-4; Sorabji (2007a) pp. 164-5.

²⁵³ For further instances where Posidonius challenged Chrysippus, see Diog. Laert. 7.102; Gal. *PHP* 4.5.26-44; Sorabji (2000) pp. 58-9, 107.

²⁵⁴ Cf. Gal. *PHP* 3.2.4-6, 3.15, 4.7.41, 5.6.31-3; Pl. *Phdr.* 246a-57b; Sorabji (2000) pp. 112-3.

Whichever view that is taken about their formation, passions are indisputably problematic and should be avoided. Seneca declares that nature demands the extirpation of passions as humans are born pure without them (2.10.3).²⁵⁵ Such views are prevalent in Stoicism and are regularly communicated through ‘seed’ or ‘*spark/igniculus*’ metaphors (cf. Aët. *Plac.* 1.7.33 (SVF 2.1027); Cic. *Fin.* 5.18, 5.43). Cleanthes believed that ‘*all men have natural tendencies to virtue*’ (Stob. *Ecl.* 2.65.8 (SVF 1.566 part))²⁵⁶ and Cicero explained how humans are born with seeds of virtue, which, on maturity, would naturally result in perfect happiness (Cic. *Tusc.* 3.2. Cf. Cic. *Nat. D.* 2.39). Individuals become corrupted by the intrusion of false beliefs from the influence of those around them, social corruption in the form of seeking glory through popular acclaim as well as the immaturity of reason when people are unable to distinguish impressions correctly and are swayed by the persuasiveness of externals.²⁵⁷ The obsession with externals rather than appreciating ‘*god’s universal law*’ is human ‘*witlessness*’ and is not inherent evil, just longing for what appears to be good (cf. Cleanthes *Hymn to Zeus* 23-9 (SVF 1.537)). In this respect, a Stoic believes that man is not inherently evil but that moral error stems from poor guidance and from unperfected wisdom.

Is Posidonius heterodox?

The extent to which Posidonius can be accused of taking a heterodox position is a complex and substantial debate. My research focuses on the impact of Posidonius’ views on Seneca and his advancement of Stoic theory. The issue is complicated by the fact that the primary source for Posidonius’ work is provided by Galen who is biased towards Posidonius in his emphasis on the philosopher’s objections to Chrysippus and by extension the orthodox Stoic views.²⁵⁸ It is possible to argue that one reason

²⁵⁵ Cf. *Ep.* 22.15; 94.55-6; Cic. *Nat. D.* 2.34; Diog. Laert. 7.89; Stob. *Ecl.* 2.7.5b3.

²⁵⁶ Translated by LS (1987) 61L p. 381. Cf. Stob. *Ecl.* 2.7.5b8.

²⁵⁷ Cf. *Ep.* 81.29; 94.54-5; 115.11-2; Cic. *Tusc.* 3.2-3; Diog. Laert. 7.89; Gal. *PHP* 5.5.14; Veyne (2003) pp. 60-2.

²⁵⁸ There are scholars who believe that Posidonius differed less from the orthodox theory than usually assumed. Fillion-Lahille (1984) proposes that Posidonius’ views are compatible with Chrysippus because both locate the soul/irrational part in the chest, rather than the lower body as Plato does (pp. 160f.). However, Inwood correctly notes that she overlooks the issue that it is not in location rather whether parts exist (Inwood (2005, 2008)

for Posidonius' views is that his ideas developed because Chrysippus struggled to comprehensively explain the lessening of passions, in terms of how they come and go, particularly the instance of crying.²⁵⁹ Posidonius sought to resolve this by proposing that the affective movements are of such great force that they are not sustainable and the cessation of passions happens over time when the irrational power becomes sated of the things it previously desired (cf. Gal. *PHP* 4.7.37, 41, 5.6.31).²⁶⁰

The implication from Galen's report is that the failings Posidonius saw in Chrysippus' arguments prompted his progression of the School's psychological theories to better explain the causes of human action (including passions).²⁶¹ Posidonius is reported to have aligned himself and Zeno with Platonists and accused other Stoics who follow Chrysippus of consenting to errors not truths because of the faults in his predecessor's arguments (Gal. *PHP* 4.4.38). Galen thought it was 'reasonable' for Posidonius to 'censure and refute' Chrysippus for not stating the origin of vice or discovering why children err (Gal. *PHP* 5.4.9). He supported Posidonius' efforts to 'correct' Chrysippus and believed it was appropriate to address the latter's errors and contradictions and 'change to the better view, as Posidonius did; he was "ashamed" to defend the doctrine, obviously false, of the other Stoics' (Gal. *PHP* 5.1.10).

In his *On Affections*, Posidonius asked Chrysippus what the cause of excessive conation was, because reason cannot by definition exceed its own acts and measures, therefore, some other irrational power must exist to cause conation to exceed the measures established by reason (Gal. *PHP*

p. 30 n. 11). For further discussion about Fillion-Lahille's views, see Inwood (2005, 2008) pp. 28-30.

²⁵⁹ Cf. Gill (1998) pp. 121-5.

²⁶⁰ Seneca acknowledges crying to be a natural and uncontrollable response which he permits in grief, arguing that the physical release of feelings is in fact soothing to the soul, so their tears should be allowed to fall without commanding them to do so and even the wise man would cry at a funeral (*Ep.* 99.15-8). Indeed, showing no reaction to the loss of a loved one would be inhumane cf. *Marc.* 4.1; *Poly.* 18.5; Reydams-Schils (2005) p. 140; Gloyd (2017) p. 59-60.

²⁶¹ Cf. Cooper (1998) p. 82.

4.3.4-5).²⁶² I agree with the view that Posidonius incorporated the idea of the division of the soul into three faculties to fill a gap in the teaching of orthodox Stoicism and to explain the profound root of the passion phenomenon.²⁶³ This interpretation would suggest that Posidonius' contribution to Stoic theory is supplementary and supportive theorising rather than critique or disagreement. I do not accept that this was an essential step, because the orthodox view towards the role of judgements in the creation of passions is reasonable.

Seeming to agree with Plato and Aristotle, Posidonius appears to consider a clear overlap of the notions of anger and desire which thus are not two distinct categories of passion. Each faculty has its own association – the rational faculty is associated with virtue; the desirous faculty is associated with pleasure and the angry (irascible) faculty is associated with the aspiration of victory and power. Posidonius has been interpreted to have claimed that anger is both a manifestation of the angry (irascible) faculty and at the same time a form of desire thus deviating from the previous view because of his division of the soul.²⁶⁴ The perceived changes to orthodox theory which Posidonius appears to be proposing may also be in response to the problems with his predecessors' views that animals and children could not experience passions (cf. Gal. *PHP* 5.1.10). Although he denied them reason, Posidonius granted animals (and children) passions (of a sort) because they originate from the spirited powers which both possess and for this reason there was a natural element to passions.²⁶⁵

In Posidonius' defence, his changes to orthodox theory may have been a by-product of his era when philosophical commentary on early texts was commonplace. This suggestion allows for the possibility that instead of overturning orthodox theory, Posidonius was attempting to 'translate' and integrate Platonic ideas which he critiqued into theories which would be

²⁶² Cf. Kidd (1971) pp. 203-4.

²⁶³ Cf. Fillion-Lahille (1984) p. 175.

²⁶⁴ Cf. Fillion-Lahille (1984) p.175.

²⁶⁵ Cf. Gal. *PHP* 4.7.33-5, 5.1.10-11, 21, 6.38, 6.37-8. For Posidonius' alternative view of virtue, see Gal. *PHP* 5.7.10-1, 7.1.9; Kidd (1971) p. 208.

accepted into Stoicism.²⁶⁶ Posidonius' success may have been based on his safeguarding the originality and strengths of Stoic thought by combining it with an acknowledgement of the irrational, low and animal part of man which, although he despised it, was one which he identified in humans to the extent that it could not be ignored.²⁶⁷ Galen refers to Posidonius' listing of the four fundamental passions, in the manner of previous Stoics, which has led to the conclusion that his views about passions are the same as Chrysippus'.²⁶⁸ The alternatives which Posidonius posited can be seen as less of a 'rebellion' when the similarities between the philosophers are acknowledged. Even Galen admitted that '*Posidonius was careful not to be caught disagreeing with Chrysippus at every point*' (Gal. *PHP* 5.3.10).

Furthermore, Seneca often includes Posidonius in a list of Stoics without separating him from the School's founders which may suggest that there was sufficient similarity in the respective philosophers' views for the issue of the division of the soul not to have caused too much friction within the School and that Seneca valued Posidonius' views sufficiently for them to influence his theories about passions (cf. *Ep.* 33.4, 108.38).²⁶⁹ Ultimately Zeno, Chrysippus and Posidonius '*All agree*' affections are the result of a sickness of soul, but the question of how the soul has moved and what motion it causes remains unanswered by orthodox Stoicism (Gal. *PHP* 4.5.30). There is consistency in the philosophers' recognition that there is a problem with passions and these need to be overcome in order to restore reason as the dominating force of man's action.

Seneca's orthodoxy on the relationship between passion and reason

The Introduction presented how Seneca critiques previous thought and contributes his own ideas without attempting to revolutionise or overturn fundamental Stoic doctrines.²⁷⁰ He will not oppose but will follow Zeno and

²⁶⁶ Cf. Gill (2005) p. 463 and (2006) p. 214.

²⁶⁷ Cf. Fillion-Lahille (1984) p.163.

²⁶⁸ Cf. Fillion-Lahille (1984) p.175.

²⁶⁹ Cf. Fillion-Lahille (1984) notes that, apart from Galen, other ancient authors writing about passions do not suggest that Posidonius abandons the earlier Stoic views (pp. 122-3). Cf. Cooper (1998) p. 100 n. 5.

²⁷⁰ Cf, Vogt (2006) pp. 59-60.

Chrysippus' doctrines because facts '*permit/patitur*' this (*Ot.* 3.1) and when they do not, he will offer alternatives.²⁷¹ The degree to which Seneca can be considered orthodox or eclectic can be drawn from his divergence from early Stoic views and his rigidity in adhering to the School's doctrines.²⁷² The impact of this on an understanding of passions and anger is that Seneca presents a clearer and more comprehensive description of how passions are formed because he has selected the most convincing and least contentious arguments from his predecessors which may reflect the understanding of the mind for Seneca's contemporaries. It has been argued that Seneca provides innovations to the theory of the formation of passions, in particular, the introduction of the role of '*voluntas*'. These additions have sparked debates about how his revisions to the conception of the soul provide indications of eclecticism, promoting dualism and being influenced by Posidonius.²⁷³

In *De Ira*, certain scholars have divided Seneca's work into where he appears to be agreeing with Chrysippus (book one) and where he seems to adopt a more Posidonian view (books two and three).²⁷⁴ Having analysed Seneca's use of orthodox material above, I will focus here on some of the associations with Posidonius, a subject which will be discussed in greater detail in the third chapter which addresses therapies for passions. The therapeutic passages are most often cited in arguments to defend Posidonius' influence, suggesting many views of *De Ira* 2.5 are founded on a Posidonian principle of therapy which largely centres on education,

²⁷¹ For Seneca's belief about the importance of freedom of thinking, see pp. 26-9.

²⁷² Cf. Inwood (2005, 2008) p. 26. For Seneca's eclecticism, see Holler (1934).

²⁷³ Cf. Inwood (2005, 2008) pp. 42-3.

²⁷⁴ The division of *De Ira* according to Seneca's influences is proposed by Fillion-Lahille (1984) and the influence of Posidonius on Seneca is argued by Holler (1934) The passages which Holler identifies in *De Ira* and the *Epistles* as being influenced by Posidonius will be discussed in detail below (Holler (1934) p. 73). These authors discuss further debates concerning the extent to which, and where, Posidonius influences Seneca. For instance, Fillion-Lahille (1984) provides an overview of how Rabbow (1914) thinks the influence is clear throughout the second book of *Ir.* whereas others think his influence is much less. For Müller (1912), as for Pohlenz (1898), it did not extend beyond *Ir.* 2.21; for Reinhardt (1921) it was limited to *Ir.* 2.19-20 (p. 182). Holler (1934) believes that Rabbow was incorrect to claim that Seneca rejects Posidonius' view in *Ir.* 1, thus contradicting himself in the second book: he believes that *De Ira* is unified, drawing on Posidonius throughout (p. 23).

supervision and medication.²⁷⁵ For instance, Posidonius argued that children can be shaped in the womb through rearing and training so that the affective part of the soul is amenable to the rule of the reasoning part when it develops (Gal. *PHP* 5.5.33-4). Seneca develops the idea of good behavioural habits in which small children must act against spontaneous reflexes of anger to prepare them for adulthood where they should exercise reason to prevent the passion (*Ir.* 2.21).²⁷⁶ Seneca and Posidonius also agree about how the elements involved in man's makeup affect his character and tendency towards passions, as does the environment (cf. 2.15.1-2, 5, 19.1-3; Gal. *PHP* 5.2.3, 5.23).²⁷⁷

Other similarities can be identified, such as the distinction between anger itself and an instinctive movement which leads to the development of Seneca's extended discussion about pre-passions (2.4).²⁷⁸ If Lactantius' evidence for a missing passage of Seneca's *De Ira* is accepted, there is indisputable evidence of Posidonius' presence. When refuting the Stoic definition of anger, Lactantius refers to Seneca's quotation of Posidonius: '*Anger is the desire to take vengeance for a wrong or, as Posidonius says, the desire to punish the person by whom you reckon you were unjustly harmed — 'Ira est, inquit, cupiditas ulciscendae iniuriae aut, ut ait Posidonius, cupiditas puniendi eius a quo te inique putes laesum'* (1.2.3 *apud* Lactant. *De ira dei* 17.13). Even if this is an accurate quotation of Seneca's text, it is reasonable to suggest that, because Seneca draws on the definitions of anger offered by a series of different schools, including Aristotle, it cannot be reasonably concluded that Posidonius was the sole or main influence on *De Ira*. Rather that he was a source of evidence on the subject from which Seneca may have drawn some of his concepts and his influence should not be overemphasised.²⁷⁹

²⁷⁵ Cf. Fillion-Lahille (1984) pp. 180-99.

²⁷⁶ Cf. Fillion-Lahille pp. 182-4.

²⁷⁷ Cf. *Ep.* 94.13. For a discussion of these passages, see pp. 105-7. Other philosophers identified a similar link to the environmental impact on character, for instance, Chrysippus revealing how Seneca's interest in the subject arose from many sources cf. Cic. *Fat.* 7; Cic. *Nat. D.* 2.17, 42-3.

²⁷⁸ Cf. Fillion-Lahille (1984) p. 180.

²⁷⁹ It is important to draw associations with other authors for their contribution to Seneca's thinking, but erroneous to make certain assumptions that similarities in writings

Although Posidonius' influence has been ascribed to several passages in *De Ira*, even here there can be disagreement over the extent to which Seneca is predisposed to a single point of view.²⁸⁰ There is some 'evidence' of the link between the philosophers which I interpret to have a more orthodox flavour, such as where Zenonian and Chrysippean theory appear more prevalent (cf. 1.16.7). A case of Seneca's acceptance of orthodox Stoic views can be found in his examples that echo those found in Chrysippus who listed examples of enraged people throwing objects, biting keys, beating doors and throwing stones while cursing as they are '*blinded*' by anger (Gal. *PHP* 4.6.44-5). Seneca notes that neither inanimate objects nor dumb animals can cause injury because this requires will from which they are exempt due to their inability to reason and therefore they should not be considered a cause for anger (2.26.4).

There are other passages which refer to controversies across the School, such as the issue over whether animals have passions or something similar which I do not believe to be particularly Posidonian in origin even though these are subjects he tackles.²⁸¹ When Seneca addresses the question of whether anger arises from choice, of its own accord or from impulse and whether it arises without knowledge (2.1-4), he associates his views with those of orthodox Stoics through his use of '*nobis/us*'. To cite this passage as having Posidonian influence ignores some of the disparities in the School's thinking. The phraseology used to describe the makeup of the body (2.1.2) may echo Posidonius' description of Stoicism in terms of bones

automatically mean that Seneca follows Posidonius' beliefs. Fillion-Lahille (1984) claims that because Seneca also quotes the historical example of Marius (about whom Posidonius composed a historical work) when explaining the idea that a simple utterance can arouse an impulse not to be confused with passion, this is also a Posidonian idea (p. 167). It is also extending the association too far to assume that because Posidonius thought so highly of Aristotle that he cited an example found in the latter (i.e. Alexander reaching for a sword with a maniacal laugh as soon as he hears Xenophante sing), Seneca is indebted to Posidonius for his theories (as is inferred by Fillion-Lahille (1984) p. 167). Chapter Three's discussion of 'cures' for passions will outline other philosophical influences on Seneca, including that of Sotion.

²⁸⁰ Holler (1934) identifies a series of passages which he cites as evidence of Posidonius' influence on Seneca: *Ir.* 1.3.7, 1.8, 1.16.7, 2.1-4, 2.30.2, 3.10 (p. 73).

²⁸¹ Cf. 1.3.7, 1.8; Gal. *PHP* 4.5.4, 5.1.10-11, 21, 6.37-8. These could be used instead to illustrate how Seneca allies with orthodox Stoics, such as the agreement that man is distinguished from animals by his capacity for reason (cf. Gal. *PHP* 5.6.38).

and sinews (logic), flesh (ethics) and the soul (physics) (frs. 87, 88). However, the rest of the section has philosophical undertones which are not confined to one philosopher.²⁸²

In general, as I will demonstrate when definitions of anger are discussed in detail in Chapter Two, philosophers from Stoic, Peripatetic and Epicurean schools recognise a connection between anger and injury (*Ir.* 2.1.3) and the orthodox Stoic view of anger's origin is relayed in terms of assent and ensuing thought processes (2.1.3-5, 3.1, 3.4-5). The physiological sensations associated with the stirring of feelings can be traced back to Chrysippus (Gal. *PHP* 2.2.7-9, 8.4, 18, 3.1.25, 5.37-41), a variation of which is found in Posidonius (Plut. *De lib. et aegr.* 4-6 (fr. 154 EK)) and is developed more precisely by Seneca (cf. 2.2, 2.3.2-3). Seneca explains the stages of passions in a clearer way than his predecessors, having assimilated various schools' views, and presents the process in his own form (cf. 2.4). This confirms that while he is aware of other thinkers' points of view, he is equally capable of formulating his own ideas and presenting them in a new way.²⁸³ Alongside advising men not to become angry with beasts, objects or God, Seneca issues the reminder that the wrongdoer is self-punished (2.30.2) conveying the Platonic idea that it is worse to do wrong than to suffer it which infiltrates Stoicism generally rather than being a new idea introduced by Posidonius, even though he may share it.²⁸⁴ The use of a medical analogy to explain the 'sickness' of passions is commonplace among Stoics and is certainly not restricted to this School: to ascribe Posidonian thought to *De Ira* 3.10 would be to overlook many other elements which make up the analogy as is detailed below.²⁸⁵

²⁸² In the *Epistles*, Seneca explicitly references Posidonius to reinforce his arguments about the nature of man whose 'primary art is virtue itself — *prima ars... ipsa virtus*' is joined to 'useless and fleeting flesh — *inutilis caro et fluida*' which is only suited to receiving food 'as Posidonius remarks — *ut ait Posidonius*' (*Ep.* 92.10. Cf. *Ep.* 102.25) cf. Fillion-Lahille (1984) p. 164. Holler (1934) draws attention to the following letters which he claims have Posidonian traits: *Ep.* 11; 71.27; 74.31; 90.44ff.; 99.18; 113.18; 116; 121.12 (p. 73).

²⁸³ Cf. Inwood (2005, 2008) pp. 11ff.

²⁸⁴ Cf. Pl. *Grg.* 473a and *Resp.* 2.358e-359a.

²⁸⁵ Cf. Holler (1934) p. 73.

It has been argued that Seneca shows slight uncertainty over the relationship between passion and reason and that he considers the division of the mind where he mentions ‘*subservient parts/partes ministras*’ (*Ep.* 92.1. Cf. *Ep.* 92.8).²⁸⁶ I agree that these comments can be interpreted as a dialectical move to open up the subject of dualism in conversation, without committing him to taking this stance and that he is merely presenting Platonic ideas to show his awareness of them and their relevance in his philosophical environment.²⁸⁷ This interpretation would reconcile the fact that elsewhere in his works, he follows the orthodox Stoic theory about the unity of the soul in which he argues that reason and passion relate to the mind’s transformation for better or worse (1.8.3).²⁸⁸ He is clear that ‘*the mind itself turns into the passion — in adfectum ipse mutatur*’ (1.8.2) which echoes Plutarch’s report of the views of ‘*Zeno, Chrysippus and the other Stoics*’ (*Plut. Mor.* 441C-D).²⁸⁹ Seneca’s use of figures of speech has also raised the issue of whether he takes a dualistic view of the soul, particularly when the personification of passions suggests an independent life and force against reason, for example in *Epistles* 34.²⁹⁰ I would argue that Seneca retains a monistic view of the soul and uses imagery for different purposes. For instance, images are the natural consequence of his rhetorical education, and imagery is used to illustrate his arguments in order to make the subject easier to relate to and assimilate, a justification found in his letter to Lucilius (*Ep.* 59.6). Seneca’s sparse allusions to dualism demonstrate an awareness of the developments within Stoicism but these references are insufficient to conclude that he held the beliefs himself. I will accept that he took a monist view because there is greater evidence for this in his work.

In *De Ira*, Seneca addresses the issue of passions from a standpoint primarily concerned with anger. He outlines the stages of anger and its causes because he is particularly concerned with whether it arises from choice, of its own accord, from impulse or whether it arises without

²⁸⁶ Cf. Inwood (2005, 2008) pp. 38-41; Gill (2006) p. 215.

²⁸⁷ As is appropriately argued by Inwood (2005, 2008) pp. 38-40.

²⁸⁸ Cf. Asmis (2015) pp. 228-30.

²⁸⁹ Cf. Graver (2014) p. 269.

²⁹⁰ Cf. *Ep.* 34.4-5, 8; 37.4-5; Inwood (2005, 2008) pp. 32-8.

knowledge (2.1.1). As well as being necessary to establishing its definition, understanding the origin of anger will impact on how it can be managed, hence the need for Seneca to address this issue. He has chosen this particular passion on which to focus because of his interest in: '*how the passions begin or grow or get carried away — quemadmodum incipient adfectus aut crescant aut efferantur*' (2.4.1). He explains that *adfectus* begins as something involuntary: '*a preparation for passion, as it were, and a kind of threatening signal — quasi praeparatio adfectus et quaedam comminatio*' (2.4.1). Then the preparation is combined with an act of volition, the confirmation that vengeance is appropriate (2.1.4) based on the belief that the individual has been unjustly wronged (2.3.5. Cf. 2.31.1). However, even in this stage there is the possibility of not falling into anger because of the oscillation of judgements (2.4.2. Cf. 2.3.4). The final stage is '*beyond our control/impotens*' – there is the wish to take vengeance even if it is not right to do so and is void of reason (2.4.1).

By breaking down the formation of passions into stages, Seneca has been interpreted as reconciling the differences between Zeno and Chrysippus' views. For instance, the second stage reflects Chrysippus' turning away from reason through following a 'mistaken' judgement and being carried away to the point of rejecting what is appropriate (Gal. *PHP* 4.4.24): the final stage expresses Zeno's 'rejection' of reason in the absence of judgement.²⁹¹ According to this sensible view, Seneca is achieving what he set out to do by following his predecessors when facts '*permit/patitur*' this (*Ot.* 3.1) and introducing his own interpretation by exerting his right of freedom of thought to show how theory progresses over time.²⁹²

Seneca's greatest progression of Stoic theory relates to his opinions about the formation of passions. In *De Ira*, Seneca expands this to incorporate the notion of '*will/voluntas*', through which the individual chooses or wishes to act in a particular way.²⁹³ This introduces the suggestion of an active and

²⁹¹ Cf. Sorabji (2000) pp. 61-3. Cf. Gill (2005) p. 448.

²⁹² For the importance of progressing existing thought, see pp. 27-8.

²⁹³ Cf. Asmis (2015) pp. 230-2.

passive part of the *principale animi*, the former being assenting, the latter experiencing pre-passions.²⁹⁴ Seneca describes anger as being an impulse which only occurs with assent based on the thought that an injury has occurred and that in response, the individual ‘*wanted/voluit*’ to take revenge (2.3.4). He emphasises the role of voluntariness in the formation of anger which cannot arise without will, i.e., wish for revenge, a view that is a development in orthodox theories of the psychology of action (2.1.4).²⁹⁵ One of the ways in which Seneca defines virtue is its relation to this volition when he says that right volition arises in those with a virtuous disposition i.e. those with perfect knowledge and therefore virtue (*Ep.* 95.56).²⁹⁶

In his description of the three stages of anger (2.4.1), Seneca continues the idea of two types of willing, the first occurring at the time of the impression, which has been termed ‘conditional willing’ and then ‘fixed willing’ which is the consequence of the assent and constitutes the passion.²⁹⁷ Seneca’s amendments to the Stoic theory of passions are important because his comprehensive description of the growth of *adfectus* provides clear signals which can be identified to stop passions from arising. This is particularly important to Seneca because of his interest in therapies for passions and emphasises man’s moral responsibility, that is, it creates a space for the individual to identify the signs of passions arising and thus also the implicit obligation to attempt to do so. The cognitive element of anger shows that angry people are not victims but have chosen to act emotionally and this conclusion is indicative of Seneca’s contribution to the Stoic theory of passions. It allows any erroneous belief that causes anger to be challenged and altered so that people can act in a rational and controlled manner thus

²⁹⁴ Cf. Rist (1989) p. 2001.

²⁹⁵ Holler (1934) argues that Seneca’s use of ‘*per se*’ when describing that anger ventures nothing by itself indicates an Aristotelian view of the *thymos*. He concludes from this that Seneca’s view is ‘something new, half old, half Peripatetic’ and questions whether this synthesis is Seneca’s own or drawn from Posidonius’ work *On Anger* (p. 21). I hold the view that Seneca has consolidated his awareness of his predecessors’ varied ideas to create something new and is not led by a single master.

²⁹⁶ Cf. Wildberger (2014) p. 310.

²⁹⁷ Cf. Asmis (2015) p. 231.

introducing the possibility that passions can be eradicated and lays the foundations for Seneca to present how this can be done.²⁹⁸

Seneca's addition of pre-passions, though he believes these to be involuntary, still relates to the Stoic doctrines of psychology by virtue of the fact that they relate to reason (or rather lack of it) and the question of voluntariness is a contribution to the theory of action and sphere of control as opposed to an attempt to overthrow traditional concepts. Seneca uses established philosophical concepts from a range of schools to place his ideas in a known philosophical context and by alluding to details from established philosophers, such as Plato, Aristotle, Chrysippus and Posidonius, of whom his audience are aware, he adds gravitas to his thinking as a philosopher. He has drawn on the ideas from his predecessors which best suit his needs and from this has developed his own arguments about passions.

The sickness of passions

Although individuals are responsible for their passions, because they choose to assent to them and thus *adfectus* are voluntary, passions are not mental states that can easily be controlled and moderated because they are perversions of reason and harmful disturbances of the soul (cf. 2.1.3-5, 2.2.2). Humans are slaves to passions because they trap people into believing that they must 'have' certain things which are often unobtainable and because they are unable to acquire them (due to them being external things beyond man's control), men become unhappy (cf. Cic. *Tusc.* 5.40-1).²⁹⁹ Stoic materialism means that disturbances of the soul are regarded as a form of 'sickness/nosema/morbus' and they are 'more destructive and more numerous – *perniciosiores pluresque*' than bodily afflictions (Cic. *Tusc.* 3.5. Cf. Diog. Laert. 7.115). This is communicated through medical metaphors to refer to the disease of passions and to promote philosophy as

²⁹⁸ Cf. Chapter Three *passim*.

²⁹⁹ Cf. Hadot (1995, 2003) p. 102.

a treatment for the mind (*animi medicina*), as medicine is for the body (cf. 1.5.6ff. 1.6.1-2, 4, 2.10.7-8).³⁰⁰

This medical metaphor is not as might be expected. The doctor does not heal the patient: the patient (admittedly following guidance) must heal himself (cf. 1.6.1, 1.16.2, 1.16.4, 3.27.1).³⁰¹ Indeed, the mind is capable of doing this itself (Cic. *Tusc.* 4.58), when it is willing to be healed (Cic. *Tusc.* 3.5) because it was capable of inventing medical science to heal the body. It is man's responsibility to care for his mind to prevent its sickness and be responsible physicians for ourselves (Cic. *Tusc.* 3.6). This is possible through understanding the cause and nature of passions which is achievable through philosophy (cf. *Ep.* 16.3; Cic. *Tusc.* 3.23). Wisdom is having a 'healthy soul/*animae sanitas*' (Cic. *Tusc.* 3.10) which is why Stoic thinkers emphasise the importance of understanding the workings of the universe, the reason for their commitment to the psychology of passions and why the conception of the soul (and disagreements regarding this matter) are of such significance.

Chrysippus insisted that a sick mind can be treated like the body and that the medicines are of equal value (Gal. *PHP* 5.2.22. Cf. Gal. *PHP* 5.2.22-33).³⁰² The perfection of the Sage shows that cures are available and nature would not be so cruel as to permit bodily cures without the equivalent for the mind (Cic. *Tusc.* 4.58). The rarity of the Sage shows the difficulty of this task, but the ideal indicates that it is possible to retain mental health.³⁰³ Chrysippus explained how the soul is analogous to a fever-prone body or one which is disposed to diarrhoea, suggesting that, as a result of personal weaknesses, entrenched value systems cause passions (Gal. *PHP* 5.2.3)

³⁰⁰ Cf. *Clem.* 1.9.6, 1.17.1, 1.18.1-2; *Constant.* 13.1-2; *Ep.* 7.1; 15.1-2; Cic. *Tusc.* 3.6-7; Stob. *Ecl.* 2.10f. Cf. Nussbaum (1994) pp. 13-4, 316-7, 328-9; Setaioli (2014b) pp. 240-1. For a discussion about the Greek origins of this metaphor, see Wright (1974) pp. 65-6 n. 9; Nussbaum (1994) pp. 48-53. The Epicureans also use medical analogies to describe the physiological effect of anger, for example, Philodemus refers to it as a state of fever (Phid. *Ir.* 8.20-7), cf. Nussbaum (1994) pp. 115-39.

³⁰¹ Cf. *Ep.* 8.2; *Helv.* 1.2, 2.1ff.; *Marc.* 1.8.

³⁰² Cf. Gill (2007) pp. 113-7.

³⁰³ For the rarity of the Sage, see p. 16.

and these happen *'irregularly and disorderly'* (Gal. *PHP* 5.2.14). He concluded that: *'The diseases and affections of the soul arise when judgements are in mutual disagreement'* (Gal. *PHP* 5.4.14). This metaphor can also be found in Stobaeus who claimed that *'proneness to sickness is a tendency towards passion'* and that this included inappropriate appetites and weaknesses or *'ailments'* (Stob. *Ecl.* 2.91.1-93.13 (SVF 3.421)).

However, while both philosophers agreed that ill-health in the soul did not occur in the Sage (Gal. *PHP* 5.2.2), Posidonius rejected Chrysippus' mind-body analogy. He did not accept that the souls of *'inferior men'* should be compared with sick bodies but with healthy ones instead, particularly since even a Sage is subject to bodily ailments (Gal. *PHP* 5.2.4-12. Cf. Cic. *Tusc.* 4.23). Instead, Posidonius proposed that the sick mind is equated with a healthy body which is prone to illness or one that is currently suffering from the disease itself (Gal. *PHP* 5.2.7-9), a view which Cicero appeared to be sympathetic towards when he stated that a mental proclivity is similar to being prone to a specific bodily illness while being in otherwise good health (Cic. *Tusc.* 4.81). Seneca, on the other hand, appears to take a Chrysippean approach by equating passions to illness, for example, he compares anger with a sick body covered in sores that groans at a gentle touch, describing *ira* as a: *'mark of a lethargic and sterile mind, aware of its own feebleness, given to chronic distress — ueternosi et infelicis animi, inbecillitatis sibi conscii, saepe indolescere'* (1.20.3).

Nevertheless, Seneca makes a distinction between *'diseases/morbi'* of the mind and passions, suggesting that it is possible to address, treat and remove *adfectus*. The former are *'hardened and chronic vices/inveterata vitia et dura'* which have become so ingrained in the mind that they have become *'permanent vices/perpetua mala'*. They are *'a persistent perversion of the judgment/iudicium in pravo pertinax'* relating to misapplication of value to the pursuit/avoidance of externals (*Ep.* 75.11). Passions on the other hand, are *'objectionable impulses of the spirit, sudden and vehement — motus animi improbabiles, subiti et concitati'* which when they occur

regularly and are not paid attention to, cause a state of disease similar to catarrh which on its own produces a cough but untreated leads to 'consumption/phthisis' which is harder to treat (*Ep.* 75.12). In this example, Seneca agrees with Cicero that regularly occurring passions which become habitual can cause permanent changes to thinking and belief systems and, by extension, personalities (*Cic. Tusc.* 4.24). Nonetheless, *adfectus* are mental disorders which can be cured by (a) preventing them arising and (b) stopping them when they arise. Following Chrysippus, Cicero insisted on the necessity of curing a sick soul in order to live well, to fulfil the human end and emphasised the necessity of wanting to be healed for philosophy to work as a treatment (*Cic. Tusc.* 3.13).

This is also what Seneca aims to demonstrate in his texts. For example, anger is a sickness of the mind involving a (mis)judgement relating to a sense of injury and the (wrong) belief that it is right to avenge it. He uses a medical metaphor to explain how even in cases where vices have proved indirectly useful, the usefulness still does not make the passion a good thing. For example, a fever may have relieved other sickness but it is still better to have no fever at all; for good health to depend on disease is abhorrent (1.12.6). Seneca believes that philosophy is more useful than drugs to prevent the spreading of illnesses and he has benefited from this (*Ep.* 8.2. Cf. *Ep.* 53.5). These analogies demonstrate how Stoicism should be taken seriously as a treatment, as well as an alternative way of life ordered by reason, not just an intellectual pastime of contemplation about abstract concepts.³⁰⁴ After all, no one would choose sickness over health (cf. *Cic. Fin.* 2.43; *Sext. Emp. Math.* 11.66).

Good feelings/*Constantiae*

Contrary to common misconception, Stoics do not advocate abolition of all feelings. They aim to be in a state without passion (*apatheia/impatientia*) so that they control their lives by rational, measured responses to things without being psychologically manipulated. Men who have perfected reason

³⁰⁴ Cf. Nussbaum (1987) p. 130; Nussbaum (1994) pp. 316ff.

experience *good feelings* or *good affective responses/eupatheiai/constantiae*.³⁰⁵ These feelings are based on rational considerations and correct choices, reflecting genuine goodness and echoing a stable internal state of affairs unaffected by fortune (cf. Diog. Laert. 7.116).³⁰⁶ The *constantiae* are *joy/chara/laetitia* (the correct expansion of the soul aroused by rational elation, a counterpart to the passion of pleasure); *caution/eulabeia/cautio* (rational avoidance, which is the alternative to irrational fear)³⁰⁷ and *wishing/boulêsis/voluntas* (knowledge that some future thing is of a sort that should be sought, as opposed to irrational desire).³⁰⁸ Seneca subscribes to these views about the existence of and need for *constantiae*, believing that men can experience a wide range of positive, appropriate feelings based on true beliefs (cf. *Ep.* 23.4-6). He argues that such feelings are necessary to living well: ‘*The very soul must be energetic and confident, lifted above every circumstance — Animus esse debet alacer et fidens et super omnia erectus*’ (*Ep.* 23.3).³⁰⁹ Seneca is clear that *impatientia* is not a ‘lack of feeling’ but a soul that cannot be harmed, or ‘*a soul entirely beyond the realm of suffering — invulnerabilem animum ... aut animum extra omnem patientiam positum*’ (*Ep.* 9.2). The wise man may feel troubles (*incommodum*) but conquers them (*vincit*) without responding angrily or in an impassioned way (*Ep.* 9.3). By perfecting caution and by the absence of distress from his *constantiae*, a man would not suffer from fear and associated threats which may provoke anger and his wishing would be restricted to things of true benefit as opposed to vengeance desired in anger.

I will interpret Seneca to be following Zeno and Chrysippus in believing that the soul is unified and the central governing function is rational. He also

³⁰⁵ Cf. Plut. *Mor.* 449A-C; Gill (2006) pp. 224-5. While *constantiae* is a Ciceronian term, in the absence of an equivalent word for *eupatheiai* in Seneca, it will be used here as the Latin phrase for ‘*good feelings*’.

³⁰⁶ Cf. Reydams-Schils (2005) pp. 49-52.

³⁰⁷ Cf. Cic. *Tusc.* 4.13; Diog. Laert. 7.116; Plut. *De Stoic. rep.* 1038b.

³⁰⁸ Cf. Cic. *Tusc.* 4.12; Diog. Laert. 7.116.

³⁰⁹ Seneca discusses caution (*Ep.* 85.26) and joy (cf. 1.6.2, 2.6.2; *Beat.* 4.4-5; *Const.* 9.3; *Ep.* 23.3-6; 27.3, 59.1-2).

continues the traditional view that within the soul there is a piece of God which provides humans with the potential to perfect reason. The modification of the soul which causes actions is a temporal sequence for Seneca which incorporates Zeno's stages of impressions, assent, cognition and knowledge. Seneca follows Chrysippus in believing that passions arise from errors in evaluative judgement about whether something is beneficial or harmful and whether it is appropriate to act because false impressions are assented to in the misbelief that they are true. The problems resulting from *adfectus* can be mitigated by reassessing evaluations so that impressions are accurately and rationally assessed. Seneca shares the belief that *adfectus* are difficult to control, despite the fact it is an individual's decision to assent to them, because they are disobedient to reason (*Ep.* 85.8). They cause irrational movements in the soul which are contrary to nature, hence the equation of them with a sickness of the mind which is commonly accepted across the School.

In these respects, I conclude that Seneca is largely following the orthodox theory of passions but is receptive to other influences which help formulate his philosophical views. He does, however, offer innovations to the theory of passions by introducing the role of *voluntas* and arguing that the identification of pre-passions can prevent passions arising. To contextualise Seneca's views about passions, I progress in Chapter Two to the analysis of his presentation of a specific passion, anger.

Chapter Two

Seneca on the nature of anger

To understand Seneca's task of removing passions, it is necessary to establish the full nature of the problem of anger. This is possible through a detailed discussion of anger, as revealed by Seneca in *De Ira* and *De Clementia*, considering its stages and causes, its physical manifestations, characteristics and consequences and how this understanding of *ira* is echoed in the Senecan tragedies *Medea* and *Thyestes*. Full comprehension of the beliefs relating to this passion requires consideration of the attitudes towards anger according to Seneca, Stoics, Aristotle and the Epicureans as propounded by Philodemus of Gadara in his *De Ira*.³¹⁰ I compare and contrast the different philosophical schools' opinions about the naturalness, usefulness and power of anger. I conclude by summarising the understanding of anger according to Seneca in preparation for discussions about how it may be addressed in subsequent chapters.

What is anger?

Chrysippus' division of anger into types was widely reported³¹¹ and Cicero identified these forms of anger as divisions of desire (Cic. *Tusc.* 4.16, 21). Although the Greeks have many terms for anger, because these terms have no direct corresponding word in Latin, Seneca states that he will not deal with the Greek words for different species of anger: instead, he draws attention to Latin terms that describe some of the varieties, such as 'bitter/*amarus*', 'harsh/*acerbus*', 'testy/*stomachosus*', 'frenzied/*rabiosus*', 'ranting/*clamosus*', 'difficult/*difficilis*', 'prickly/*asper*' and 'peevish/*morosus*' (1.4.2).³¹² He distinguishes *ira* from the characteristic of

³¹⁰ Philodemus' writing does not appear to have had a direct influence on Seneca in that he is not mentioned by name (cf. Tsouna (2011) p. 209). However, he is a source of information for modern readers regarding Epicurean philosophy. Tsouna (2007a) claims that from a cultural point of view *De Ira* 'reflects a widespread ancient preoccupation with the nature, use, and control of anger from Homer onwards' and from a philosophical point of view 'it is a major contribution to the relevant Epicurean literature, and occupies an important place in the on-going debate about the emotions' (p.195).

³¹¹ Cf. Andron. *SVF* 3.97; Diog. Laert. 7.113; Stob. *Ecl.* 2.91.10 (*SVF* 3.395).

³¹² Cf. Vogt (2006) p. 62.

'*wrathfulness/iracundia*' whereby anger is regarded as an episode of the passion whereas wrathfulness is a disposition inclined to anger (1.4.1. Cf. Cic. *Tusc.* 4.27-8).³¹³ Then he proceeds to present other kinds of anger involving shouting, physical and verbal abuse, complaints, sulking and those which are turned on the self (1.4.3). He concludes that: '*there are a thousand other varieties of this polymorphous evil — mille aliae species sunt mali multiplicis*' (1.4.3). Seneca presents anger's manifestation in explosive speech, impatience and competitiveness, rather than considering its components, such as hostility, suspicion, rage, hatred, resentment and indignation. In this respect, Seneca is following the tradition of focusing on the behavioural manifestations of anger typical of ancient discussion. In doing so, he makes the subject easier to assimilate because it provides concrete evidence of the passion with which his reader would be familiar and looking at anger in this way is a more helpful and practical approach for its management and removal.

I Anger in *De Ira* and *De Clementia*

Seneca opens *De Ira* with a description of anger as the most foul and frenzied of all the passions (1.1.1) and as the greatest of evils, surpassing all vices (2.36.6).³¹⁴ By describing his understanding of anger from the outset, Seneca enables his reader to comprehend its nature and extent as it unfolds across the three books. Seneca places it in relation to other passions, which allow a degree of calm. Anger:

... consists entirely in aroused assault. Raging with an inhuman desire to inflict pain in combat and shed blood in punishment, it cares nothing for itself provided it can harm the other: it throws itself on the very weapons raised against it, hungry for a vengeance that will bring down the avenger too —

³¹³ Philodemus also regards anger as a disposition of irascibility, or an individual outburst of anger, and explains angry episodes by reference to disposition cf. Tsouna (2007a) p. 210.

³¹⁴ I do not interpret the comment that anger is the greatest of evils to mean that Seneca is deviating from orthodox Stoicism by proposing that there are degrees of vice and in doing so would be agreeing with Posidonius, as has been proposed by Fillion-Lahille (1984) p. 185. Anger's greatness here refers to the speed at which it arises and how it dominates other passions.

*hic totus concitatus et in impetu est, doloris armorum,
sanguinis suppliciorum minime humana furens cupiditate,
dum alteri noceat sui negligens, in ipsa inruens tela et
ultionis secum ultorem tracturae avidus.* (1.1.1).

Seneca uses military metaphors throughout his discussion of anger. He uses this language to emphasise not only the extent of the internal struggle against the power of the passion and its dangerous consequences but the necessary force and endeavour which is required to overcome *ira* and the appealing victory of achieving extirpation.³¹⁵

In his war against anger, these military metaphors are not only appropriate but vital to illustrate the scale of his task. The figurative language makes Seneca's arguments more accessible and convincing even to non-philosophers because he uses terms drawn from traditional Roman value systems where being victorious over evil is admirable. This would make his arguments, that *ira* has no positive value, that it is an obstacle to success and achieving virtue and so must be expelled, persuasive to his contemporaries.³¹⁶ The metaphors show how to control anger by resisting incitement. The enemy must be stopped immediately before it overrules: similarly, once the mind is captured by passion it is unable to defend itself (1.8.2). Elsewhere, Seneca presents philosophy as a warrior capable of deflecting weapons (*Ep.* 53.12) and that it provides an '*impregnable wall/inexpugnabilis murus*' (*Ep.* 82.5) offering protection from all enemies.³¹⁷ This varied use of military themes demonstrates in the first instance the extent of the problem of anger, but that philosophy is victorious over its enemies and for this reason, as a rational being, man should subscribe to it.

An alternative response to *ira* is *clementia* which holds such significance to Seneca as to prompt a treatise on the subject where he applies innovative

³¹⁵ Cf. 1.1.1, 1.8.2, 1.10.1, 1.11, 2.10.4, 2.35.1; Herington (1966) pp. 434-5; Star (2012) p. 27.

³¹⁶ Cf. Star (2012) pp. 27-8.

³¹⁷ Cf. Star (2012) p. 25.

ideas to the concept to progress traditional and existing Stoic opinions.³¹⁸ It is important to his theory of passions because it offers an alternative response to anger. *Clementia* is defined as restraint in revenge (*Clem.* 2.3.1), leniency in prescribing penalties and when exacting punishment (*ibid.* 2.3.1), remission of a deserved punishment (*ibid.* 2.3.2. Cf. *ibid.* 1.15.7, 1.22.1; *Ir.* 1.6.3-5) and receding from what could deservedly be imposed (*Clem.* 2.3.2. Cf. *ibid.* 1.14.1, 2.6.3). It involves freedom of decision to judge according to what is right (*ibid.* 2.7.3) and requires good reason, mental calm and clarity (*ibid.* 1.5.5. Cf. *ibid.* 1.7.2, 1.13.4). It is neither pity, a misjudgement about the value of other people's apparent misfortunes (*ibid.* 2.4.4, 2.5.4, 2.6.4), nor is it pardon (*ibid.* 2.7.1).³¹⁹

For Seneca, clemency was not an emotional impulse involving forgiveness in cases of punishment. Many Stoics perceived this as leniency in the penal system and this would conflict with the law which is in accordance with nature and therefore would make clemency an unacceptable, even inexcusable, vice.³²⁰ Seneca's revised definition proposes that clemency was a disposition, not a passion, and he redirects the focus onto *humanitas*, which is not only acceptable, but encouraged by Stoicism (*ibid.* 2.5.3).³²¹ This begins in Seneca's defence against Stoic critics (and indirectly against Stoics' criticism of his encouragement of *clementia*) where he challenges the common charges of the alleged harshness of their doctrine and accusations that the Sage shows neither pity nor forgiveness. He defends Stoicism as being the kindest and most lenient, philanthropic School concerned with the common good (*ibid.* 2.5.2-3. Cf. *Ir.* 1.5.2) and argues that Stoics, as a group, share knowledge to improve society (cf. *Ep.* 6.4).

³¹⁸ Cf. Dowling (2006) pp. 194-203; Braund (2009) pp. 30-44.

³¹⁹ Cf. Konstan (2015) pp. 179-81.

³²⁰ Cf. Diog. Laert. 7.123; Stob. *Ecl.* 2.95.24-96.9 (*SVF* 3.640); Griffin (1976, 1992) pp. 158-9; Schofield (2015) pp. 75-7; Konstan (2015) pp. 180-1.

³²¹ In a similar vein, Nussbaum (1993a) notes that *De Ira* ends with the proposal that men should '*cultivate humanity/colamus humanitatem*' (3.43.5) and '*forgive the human species/universis ignoscendum est*' (2.10.2) (pp. 101-2). Cf. Stob. *Ecl.* 2.11. *Humanitas* was an important consideration for Seneca for it involves being gentle and not overbearing (cf. *Ep.* 88.30) and is not crying for other people's losses (*Tranq.* 15.5). Cf. Griffin (1976, 1992) p. 170; Motto (1984) p. 230; Balbo (2012) pp. 69-81; Wilson (2014) p. 124.

Responding to contentious situations with *clementia* as opposed to *ira* is particularly relevant to rulers, who, by setting good examples, can lead their subjects into productive behaviour and social cohesion, a key responsibility in Stoicism for improved and appropriate relations with other people. While *clementia* is potentially present in everyone (*Clem.* 1.5.2), it is more suited to those in positions of power because it is displayed by a superior toward an inferior (*ibid.* 1.3.3, 1.5.4). These definitions cover the overall quality of mind which the owner of the virtue enjoys, that is moderation and mildness, taking into account the action of punishing/seeking revenge. Seneca continues to argue that: ‘Savage, implacable anger/saeua... inexorabilis ira’ is unsuited to a king because it prevents superiority (*ibid.* 1.5.6. Cf. *Ir.* 2.34.1) and concludes that a true ruler should adopt the ‘spirit of the gods/deorum animum’ instead (*Clem.* 1.5.7). To be likened to the gods is appealing in itself to the emperor but also reassuring to his subjects. *De Ira* deals with *clementia* in the private man, where it is emphasised that cruelty corrupts the mind making it increasingly less rational.³²² ‘Cruelty/crudelitas’ is a topic widely discussed in *De Ira* where the focus lies on the role of anger in punishment, as will be discussed below. Seneca contrasts a king’s and a tyrant’s attitude towards executions, citing Dionysius of Syracuse as a positive example (1.12ff.) and Sulla as a negative one (1.12.2-3).

Physical manifestations of anger

To expose the vileness of anger in contrast with the composure and countenance of the virtue, Seneca paints a disturbing picture of angry men that is physically repulsive, with blazing eyes, a red face, quivering lips, ground teeth, bristly hair, heaving breathing, cracking joints, who groan and bellow and speak incoherently while clapping their hands and stamping the ground: ‘as they “act out anger’s massive menace”, they have the repellent and terrifying features of people who are deformed and bloated — “magnasque irae minas agens,” foeda uisu et horrenda facies deprauantium se atque intumescentium’ (1.1.4).³²³ The hideousness of anger is re-

³²² Cf. Dowling (2006) pp. 203-7.

³²³ Cf. Plut. *Mor.* 455E-F; van Hoof (2007) pp. 72-4. Philodemus recounted a similar physical caricature of the angry man, cf. Phld. *Ir.* fr. 6.3-12, 6.12-20, 8.31-9.21, 9.29-33,

emphasised in the second book where Seneca states that its features are more disturbed than other passions (2.35.3).³²⁴ Seneca acknowledges the fact that anger is a sufficiently unpleasant vice to undermine even the greatest physical beauty and he could be interpreted as playing on man's vanity as a deterrent for anger when he notes that it turns the most beautiful faces ugly by making the most peaceful countenance fierce. All grace departs from the angry person. A man who is usually well-kempt and fashionable will, in anger, allow his clothing to trail and cease to take pride in his appearance; for example, stylish hair becomes bristled reflecting his state of mind (2.35.3).

The physiological effects of anger are equally concerning and include swollen veins, panting, distended neck from screaming, frantic speech, trembling limbs and restless hands: '*the whole body is buffeted as if by waves — totius corporis fluctuatio*' (2.35.3. Cf. 2.35.5, 3.4.1). These consequences all illustrate the ungovernable nature of the passion once it is allowed to take root. Anger also produces clashing teeth, as if in preparation for biting, which Seneca equates with the noise of a wild boar sharpening his tusks by rubbing (3.4.2). The comparison of the angry man with wild beasts, who lack the capacity for reason, emphasises the baseness of anger. Indeed, for a Stoic this is particularly horrifying – to become like an animal is to lose reason, which defines humans. The metaphors show that even at their most grotesque, such as when tortured by hunger or pierced by a spear or half dead as they charge at their hunter, beasts are less hideous in appearance than a man inflamed by anger (3.4.3).³²⁵

Considering the horrors of the external presentation of anger, Seneca invites Novatus to consider its internal expression. If the soul were visible, its appearance in anger would shock, because it would be black, mottled,

10.28-2. Harris (2001, 2004) notes how the Greeks equated physical excellence with moral excellence and that the appearance of an angry man would be particularly hideous (p. 103).

³²⁴ Cf. Cic. *Tusc.* 4.52; Plut. *Mor.* 458D.

³²⁵ Cf. 1.1.6, 1.3.4-8, 1.17.6, 2.5.3, 2.31.6, 3.4.2-3.

distorted and swollen, a viler sight than its physical manifestation (2.36.2). Seneca's description of a dark soul means that man is no longer pure as at birth, but is tarnished by the negativity of passions (2.10.3).³²⁶ This comment is more than a metaphor; it reflects Stoic materialism in which thoughts have corporal origins and that the body reflects the state of mind depending on the degree of tension of the *anima*.³²⁷ In this respect, an angry man is aesthetically unpleasant, both internally and externally, thus mirroring the ethical failures of giving in to the passion, a view which Philodemus also acknowledged when he stated that the black bile to which angry men are susceptible turns their hearts black (Phld. *Ir.* 9.37-41).

The characteristics of anger

Seneca elaborates his descriptions of anger by discussing its characteristics. He believes that it is uncontrollable, comparable with insanity and has catastrophic consequences, all of which will be discussed in turn. Starting with the fact that anger is uncontrollable, Seneca argues that while other ills come gradually, anger is sudden and subjugates all other passions (2.36.6). It is an active impulse which is aroused and rushes forward: *'that leaps clear of reason, that snatches reason up and carries it along — quae rationem transilit, quae secum rapit'* (2.3.4). A man may start angry with one man, then another, with slaves then freedmen, with parents, then children and with acquaintances, then with strangers (3.28.1). Indeed, *ira* is *'unbridled and untamed/effrenatam indomitamque'* (1.9.3) and *'it's unwilling to be controlled/non uult regi'* (1.19.1). *Ira* lasts longer than the initial hurt (3.27.1). Those who have succumbed to anger are not able to return to reason, for instance, the frenzy of anger drove Ajax to suicide (2.36.5).³²⁸ To explain the apparent contradiction of Seneca claiming that anger is uncontrollable and yet curable with reason, I assume that he means that an angry man is uncontrollable, yet it is possible to stop anger from

³²⁶ Cf. *Ep.* 22.15; 94.55-6.

³²⁷ A similar description of an ugly soul is found in the eschatological myth in Plato, where it is used metaphorically (Pl. *Gorg.* 523a-527e). Here, the soul is distorted and ugly because of *'license and luxury, arrogance and incontinence in its actions'* (Pl. *Gorg.* 525a). Translated by Zeyl (1997) p. 867. For Stoic materialism and the tension of the soul, see pp. 55-6.

³²⁸ Cf. Cic. *Tusc.* 4.52-3.

arising and that it is only possible to regain control when anger has subsided (1.8.6).

Anger as insanity

Passions can result in a permanent state of disturbance of mind either through a predisposition to behave in such a way or by causing a disease of the mind as they disrupt rational thought and responses (1.7.3. Cf. 1.16.3).³²⁹ *Ira*'s extensive disruption to mental states has led it to be seen as insanity because those who are angry are carried away by excessive feelings and are no longer under the control of intelligence. In this respect, man's lack of rationality aligns him with animals, a state which many Stoic thinkers would consider to be unacceptable because it is humans' capacity for reason, which distinguishes them from beasts. Chrysippus explained how people relate to those in anger as they would to those who are '*out of their mind*', '*have taken leave of their senses, and are not in their right minds or in possession of their faculties*' (Gal. *PHP* 4.6.24).³³⁰ He communicated this problem when he described how the angry man throws a piece of wool or a sponge without accomplishing anything from doing so because, in anger: '*We take such leave of ourselves and get so far outside ourselves and are so completely blinded in our frustrations...*' (Gal. *PHP* 4.6.44). Cicero echoes this when he notes the lengths anger and madness go to and that the angry person is '*out of control/impotens*' in the sense they are '*out of intent, their reason, their conscious thought — de consilio, de ratione, de mente*', things which ordinarily control the mind (Cic. *Tusc.* 4.77).³³¹

There are instances where the individual is conscious that he is being disobedient to reason, but continues to be governed by passions, still believing that his mistaken belief is correct, despite the partial realisation that this is irrational. Chrysippus cited the case of Medea, who states that: '*I understand the evils I am going to do, // but anger prevails over my*

³²⁹ Cf. Cic. *Tusc.* 3.8.

³³⁰ Cf. Gal. *PHP* 4.6.27, 31-2, 34-5.

³³¹ Cf. 2.4.1; Cic. *Tusc.* 4.22; Gal. *PHP* 4.4.24.

counsels' (Eur. *Med.* lines 1078-9 *apud* Gal. *PHP* 3.3.13-8, 4.2.27).³³² He used this to illustrate how what is in an individual's best interests can be overturned by passions through the vacillating judgements which they invoke and false judgements as opposed to the true ones can motivate action (cf. Plut. *Mor.* 446F-7A).³³³

Seneca communicates the relationship between *ira* and insanity by comparing the physical appearance of an angry person and a madman both of whom wear threatening expressions, frown, move quickly with restless hands, have changes in complexion and sigh forcefully (1.1.3. Cf. 1.1.4). The physiological references associated with anger in Seneca reflect the Stoic view of the physical effect of passions on the soul in causing 'movements' making man unsettled in his thoughts which is reflected in his behaviour which at times appears erratic and insane. Anger is understood to be a '*brief madness/brevis insania*' because it is temporary, but just as severe as ordinary insanity:

[Anger is] *no less lacking in self-control, forgetful of decency, unmindful of personal ties, unrelentingly intent on its goal, shut off from rational deliberation, stirred for no substantial reason, unsuited to discerning what's fair and true, just like a collapsing building that's reduced to rubble even as it crushes what it falls upon — aequae inpotens sui est, decoris oblita, necessitudinum immemor, in quod coepit pertinax et intenta, rationi consiliisque praeclusa, uanis agitata causis, ad dispectum aequi uerique inhabilis, ruinis simillima quae super id quod oppressere franguntur.* (1.1.2).³³⁴

Seneca's presentation of anger may also contain echoes of Epicurean views about this passion's impact. Philodemus too saw anger as irrational, occurring in 'slavish' souls (Phld. *Ir.* 21.5-6). It halts reason and is comparable to madness,³³⁵ to the extent that it is voluntary destruction

³³² Cf. Dillon (1997); Gill (1983), (1998) pp. 116-21 and (2006) pp. 255-60; Price (1994) pp. 160-1; Staley (2010) p. 33.

³³³ Cf. Sorabji (2000) pp. 56-7; Graver (2007) pp. 70-1. For Medea's vacillations and hesitation, see pp. 220-1.

³³⁴ Cf. 1.7.4; *Ep.* 18.15.

³³⁵ Cf. Phld. *Ir.* 10.19-26, 12.20-2, 16.34-40.

(Phld. *Ir.* 23.25). These philosophers appear to be in agreement that forms of loss of reason, such as in cases of anger, have as adverse effects on the way a man thinks as insanity does, in that he loses the control that reason provides and which is essential to living well in terms of making correct decisions in thinking and behaviour. The comparison reflects Seneca's receptiveness towards assimilating other philosophical ideas while capturing a general understanding of anger.

Seneca claims that no one would consider the man sane who, like one being hurled along by a hurricane, was a '*slave to a frenzied evil/furenti malo seruit*', who exacts his own revenge and is bloodthirsty in purpose and deed, murders those closest to him and destroys everything for which he would cry (3.3.3). The madness of anger is evidenced in the fact it causes self-harm, physically (2.35.1) and/or mentally (3.4.4). Anger makes men fearful (cf. 2.10.3-4, 2.11.3-4), proving that it harms the angry man as much as it does the object of anger (cf. 1.1.1, 2.36.4-5, 3.27-8). To view anger as insanity may arouse more sympathy and tolerance because illness detracts from the individual's capacity to assess a situation accurately and respond appropriately – if you are ill you cannot 'help' the way you are. However, the medical analogy has a different purpose for Seneca and many Stoics.³³⁶ It suggests there is a 'cure' and the focus of the metaphor is on the possibility of recovery. While this enables a Stoic to have compassion towards the angry man, he is not vindicated. He errs and requires reformation, even through punishment as its purpose is not to harm, '*but heal under the guise of harming/sed medetur specie nocendi*' (1.6.1) but punishment must be issued as a form of remedy (1.16.2). Seneca's descriptions are in line with the commonly accepted view of justice, which as a social construct involves fairness, equality and benevolence towards people. This echoes Seneca's comments in *De Clementia*, where he defines the law of punishment as having three aims: to reform the punished, to improve other people by punishing the criminal, or to keep people safe from him by removing him (*Clem.* 1.22.1). Seneca uses his work on the subject of anger to address

³³⁶ For use of the medical metaphor in Stoic thinking, see pp. 81-4.

the social issues surrounding its consequences to persuade his reader of the benefits of and need for alternative responses.

Anger, society and God

The struggle with passions is personal but in the case of anger is also a social issue, as its consequences are far-reaching. Anger takes many different forms and habitually ruins society (1.4.2-3. Cf. 2.36.5). In a discussion about human criminality resulting from anger, Seneca details crimes within the household (2.9.2),³³⁷ those across the state (2.9.3. Cf. 3.2.2ff.) and international atrocities (2.9.4. Cf. 3.2.5-6). The destruction anger causes is worse than any plague. It is responsible for bloodshed and poisoning, dishonourable defendants bringing counter-charges of baseness, the fall of cities and nations, producing illegal slavery and houses being torched (1.2.1-3). To avoid such atrocities, alternative ways of viewing relations with other people need to be considered, as does man's relationship with the universe.

Stoic thinkers are generally materialists and monists, believing that the world consists of matter and God (cf. Diog. Laert. 7.134ff.).³³⁸ Their God forms the governing part of each human soul which is a fragment of the divine *logos* giving man an innate capacity to develop reason (*Helv.* 8.3).³³⁹ According to Zeno the cosmos is one (Diog. Laert. 7.143) and Chrysippus stated that: '*our individual natures are parts of the nature of the whole universe*' (Diog. Laert. 7.87).³⁴⁰ This makes people citizens of the universe, rather than simply members of an individual tribe or nationality and with this view comes a degree of duty of care for other people.³⁴¹ Taking this world-

³³⁷ Seneca quotes *Ov. Met.* 1.144-8. Philodemus was also aware of the social consequences of anger. Tsouna (2007a) claims that he was one of the first philosophers to criticise private rage and fault anger against children (p. 214). Cf. *Phld. Ir.* 17.8-9; 22.29-31; 23.36-40; 24.1-4; 34.17-36; fr. 13.23-6.

³³⁸ Cf. Algra (2003, 2006); Setaioli (2014c).

³³⁹ Cf. *Ep.* 31.11; 41; 65.24; 66.12; 71.6; 73.16; 79.12; 92.30, 92.34; 110.2; 117.6; 120.14; *Ep.* 92.10; *Ot.* 5.5; *QNat.* 1 pr.11, 2.45.1, 6.16.1; *Cic. Nat. D.* 2.5, 12, 33-6, 167; Diog. Laert. 7.88; Gal. *PHP* 5.6.4; *Sext. Emp. Math.* 9.61-9.71. For Seneca's concept of the Stoic God, see Burton (1909); Motto (1955c); Setaioli (2007).

³⁴⁰ Cf. Setaioli (2007) p. 337.

³⁴¹ Cf. *Beat.* 20.5; *Ben.* 1.15.2; *Ep.* 5.4; 28.4; 95.52; 102.21; *Helv.* 8.5-6; *Ot.* 4.1; *Cic. Fin.* 3.62-8; *Cic. Off.* 1.12, 1.50-3, 3.21, 3.50-7; *Cic. Nat. D.* 2.78; Pratt (1983) p. 69; Schofield (1991) p. 93; Veyne (2003) p. 143.

view alerts attention to responsibility, not only for self, but to other people: having appropriate care for other people is a marked part of Stoic instruction.

In a School where the greatest good for man and the universe is central, *clementia* is a critical virtue for Stoics to possess, thus proving itself to be the appropriate alternative to *ira* which is wholly destructive. Seneca uses an organic image to suggest how, when living in accordance with nature as humans should, other people are loved like parts of the body and people work together for mutual protection (2.31.7). The good king and his subjects are in harmony, like mind and body (*Clem.* 1.3.5. Cf. *ibid.* 1.5.1) and father and child (*ibid.* 1.14.1-3).³⁴² There is a reciprocal concern and bond of *fides* (*ibid.* 1.3.3-5).³⁴³ Consequently, it is a crime to injure one's country and fellow-citizen, as he is part of the country and greater commonwealth (cf. Plut. *Mor.* 1065E-F). In this respect, *clementia* facilitates reciprocity and future protection which produces the creation and continuation of a society working towards the common good.³⁴⁴

Establishing one's relationship with the universe requires understanding of the forces within it and taking responsibility for one's actions. This is particularly important when considering the impact of passions which can be better understood by considering Stoic theology. By understanding the nature of a divine and providential world, Seneca educates his readers in the futility of becoming angry with God. Seneca considers gods to be agents who are free from passions and not responsible for human actions, so cannot be blamed for intervention, thus men should not become angry with them (2.28.4. Cf. 2.27ff.).³⁴⁵ The Stoic God is synonymous with providence,³⁴⁶ fate,³⁴⁷ nature³⁴⁸ and reason,³⁴⁹ all of which create and

³⁴² Cf. Veyne (2003) pp. 17-8.

³⁴³ Cf. *Clem.* 1.4, 1.5.1, 1.13.4-5, 1.14.1-3, 1.19.6ff., 2.31.7.

³⁴⁴ Cf. *Clem.* 1.5.4, 2.5.3, 2.6.3.

³⁴⁵ Cf. *Clem.* 1.8.2, 5; Diog. Laert. 7.147.

³⁴⁶ Cf. *Prov.* 1.1; *QNat.* 2.45; *Cic. Nat. D.* 2.73-5.

³⁴⁷ Cf. 2.27.2.

³⁴⁸ Cf. *Ben.* 4.7.1, 4.8.2.

³⁴⁹ Cf. *Ep.* 65.12, 23; *Prov.* 1.2-3.

maintain the moral order of the world (*SVF* 1.537). Consequently, to correctly follow nature, it is man's duty to believe in God (*Ep.* 95.50) and in doing so He unites mankind (*Ep.* 117.6). He is concerned with human affairs as a creator of nature and protector of mankind.³⁵⁰ The absolutism of Stoicism is such that good and evil cannot co-exist and by extension God will cause humans no injury and therefore, men should not become angered at Him when events are not favourable.

II Attitudes to anger in Seneca, Stoics, Aristotle and the Epicureans **Seneca's response to Aristotelian and Epicurean views of anger**

Seneca seeks to establish his views about *ira* as against those of his predecessors by tackling the common attitudes towards anger, to dispel the myths surrounding its naturalness, usefulness and that it only requires moderation. This is done to reinforce his belief that the only resolution for anger is its removal. Seneca responds directly to Aristotle but only implicitly to the Epicureans. I will first consider Seneca's view of anger in relation to Aristotelian and Epicurean views in a general way and then proceed to address specific issues about whether anger is natural, moderate, powerful, and present in a Sage, as well as its usefulness in warfare, punishment and virtue. The common view of anger is that its aim is to regain control, status or self-worth by punishing the wrongdoer for the injury they have caused. While there may be some short-term satisfaction from seeing the person responsible for causing an injury experience the same pain, this fails to provide a permanent solution: instead it perpetuates the problem. Some people are satisfied by an apology and recognition of ill-conduct through remorse, which is better acquired through calm and reasoned conversation than through angry behaviour. Never to let other people's negative actions impact on one's status or wellbeing removes any requirement to re-establish it. In this way, a Stoic accepts responsibility for securing his own success

³⁵⁰ The Stoic God is powerful, just and omnipresent (cf. *Ep.* 31.10, 19ff.; Tert. *Apol.* 10). He is the creator, the 'maker/artifex' (cf. *Ben.* 4.7.1; *Ep.* 65.19; 98.26; *QNat.* 2.45.1; Cic. *Nat. D.* 2.57-8; *SVF* 1.534) and the 'founder/conditor' (cf. *Ep.* 119.15). He is 'ruler/rector' (cf. *Beat.* 8.4; *Ep.* 65.23; Cic. *Nat. D.* 2.77) and the universe (cf. *Ep.* 71.12; 92.30; Cic. *Nat. D.* 1.37). He is benevolent (cf. 2.27.1; *Ben.* 2.29.6, 4.5.1; *Clem.* 1.19.9; *Ep.* 95.47), acts as a father/guardian to the universe (cf. *Ben.* 2.29.4; *Ep.* 58.27-8; 73.15; *Prov.* 1.5, 2.6, 2.7, 4.7; Cic. *Nat. D.* 2.60, 164; Plut. *Mor.* 1065E-F).

and the good example which a virtuous man provides is how to command truly unwavering respect.

Nonetheless, there is common agreement among Stoics, Peripatetics and Epicureans that anger involves a sense of undeserved injury (cf. 2.31.1-3). Chrysippus characterised anger as '*the desire to take vengeance against one who is believed to have committed a wrong contrary to one's deserts*' (Stob. *Ecl.* 2.91.10 (SVF 3.395). Cf. Diog. Laert. 7.113).³⁵¹ For Aristotle, anger is defined as an impulse with pain for revenge to correct a slight either to a man or his friends and must be directed at an individual (Arist. *Rh.* 1378a31ff.). Seneca agrees with Aristotle's definition of anger involving slight, pain to self or those with whom a man is intimate and the desire for revenge or payback, '*auida poenae est*' (1.5.3). He admits that there is little difference between the Schools' belief that '*anger is the strong desire to return pain to pain — iram esse cupiditatem doloris reponendi*' (1.3.3). Similarly, the Epicureans believe that a reasonable motive for anger is being intentionally harmed or the perception that this has been the case (Phld. *Ir.* 40.32-5) and that it can be caused by feelings of alienation and hatred (cf. Phld. *Ir.* 41.40-42.3).³⁵²

Seneca recognises that anger is born from an error in judgement surrounding injury, often from minor incidents, for instance, personal insults, physical assault, prevention from goal attainment, damage to belongings, teasing or nagging, blame, unfairness, neglect, condescension and incompetence, leading to more serious attacks.³⁵³ Anger is the belief that having been wronged, it is right to respond in an aggressive way (2.1.3). In some instances, *ira* is prompted by feelings of potential harm (1.3.1. Cf. 2.26.1): at other times, by others failing to meet expectations of them (3.6.4). In both instances, anger is the result of someone, or something, disappointing expectations and causing emotional frustration. Where the schools disagree is over how to respond to slights. In short, the Peripatetics

³⁵¹ Translated by Konstan (2015) p. 176.

³⁵² Cf. Asmis (2011).

³⁵³ Cf. 1.12.4, 2.2.2, 2.25.1, 2.26.2, 3.33.1-4, 3.34.1, 3.37.4.

insist that any injury to an individual or another person should be responded to for the sake of personal honour and self-respect. The Epicureans agree with the Peripatetics that an angry response is necessary for self-preservation and they allow even their wise men to have this reaction.³⁵⁴ They recognise that while the passion itself is evil because it is painful, with certain dispositions when it is the result of an insight into the nature of something and it is without misjudgements, anger can be good (Phld. *Ir.* 38.18-22, 33ff.). A Stoic does not allow anger under any circumstances and would see any perceived 'attack' upon him as 'indifferent' because it does not impact on his pursuit of virtue (*Constant.* 2.3-3.4). He believes that the best practical response is to 'turn a blind eye' and protects himself from future attacks by not allowing other people's actions to disturb him. This is the lesson which Seneca communicates in *De Ira* and *De Clementia*.

When acknowledging different philosophical outlooks, Seneca will not outline the differences between Aristotle and himself but notes a criticism that may be levied against both philosophers that animals' anger is not the result of injury, nor is it seeking punishment, because they are not capable of this rationale (1.3.3).³⁵⁵ Other references in *De Ira* show the areas in which Seneca disagrees with Aristotle and reinforce his attempts to distance himself from the Peripatetic views of passions, which, over time, were becoming increasingly difficult to distinguish from those of the Stoa.³⁵⁶ For example, Seneca was particularly concerned about the Peripatetics' association of pleasure with anger, its relation with virtue and its usefulness. In his definition, Aristotle referred to the pleasure which comes from anger after seeking vengeance (Arist. *Rh.* 1378b. Cf. Arist. *Eth. Nic.* 1117a6ff.).

³⁵⁴ This view is founded on Epicurus' claim that the Sage is more susceptible than others to passions without impeding his wisdom (Diog. Laert. 10.117). Later Epicureans debated whether the Sage was susceptible to all forms of anger (see Phld. *Ir.* 40.30-40). Cf. Phld. *Ir.* 36.13-5, 38.1-6, 39.7, 40.26ff., 41.17-25, 42.2-11, 43.18-24, 45.5-15, 47.27-39; Asmis (2011) p. 152.

³⁵⁵ Aristotle insisted that in the absence of the capacity to think, animals are unable to distinguish between good and evil and justice and injustice. Consequently, they do not experience passions, only bodily sensations relating to pleasure and pain cf. *De an.* 414b18-9, 415a7-9; 427b6-14, 427b8-14, 428a18-24, 434a5-11. Cf. Fortenbaugh (1975) p. 67; Sandbach (1985). For whether animals suffer passions, see pp. 59-60.

³⁵⁶ Boal (1972) notes the difficulties which Seneca faces in distinguishing himself from Aristotle and his followers because of 'the problem of justifying his opposition to a philosopher whose reputation was considerable' (pp. 65-6).

Epicureans also believe there is pleasure in 'empty anger'. The irascible man may experience pleasure from vengeance, but the correct 'natural anger' of the Epicurean Sage does not incorporate pleasure in punishment and the lust for vengeance is appropriately absent (Phld. *Ir.* 44.15-22). For Seneca, anger and pleasure are distinct passions, with the former bearing no relation to virtue and having no use (1.9.1) and the pleasure that comes from anger is transformed into cruelty (2.5). Seneca agrees with the commonly held Stoic view that passions are harmful and does not accept that they involve pleasure, particularly as anger is so destructive, and agrees that good and evil cannot co-exist (cf. 1.8.3).³⁵⁷

Is anger natural?

When considering the appropriateness of anger, it is necessary for Seneca to consider the relationship between *ira* and nature to justify the need for its removal (1.5.1f.). The role of nature in human lives is significant in ancient ethical theories, particularly for Stoicism, which based the idea of living well and virtuously on living in accordance with individual and universal nature – '*secundum naturam*' – which is synonymous with reason.³⁵⁸ To defend the necessity of removing *ira*, Seneca promises Novatus that he will address the questions of whether anger is in accordance with nature, and whether it is expedient or necessary in certain conditions (1.5.1). This is an important concern as Cicero inquired how something can be regarded as being in accordance with nature when it objects to reason (Cic. *Tusc.* 4.79). It is necessary for Seneca to address this issue in order to establish his views in relation to the philosophers he wishes to refute. Seneca agrees with the view that the Stoic Sage, the sort of person which everyone should strive to be, is not moved by passions and therefore anger cannot be natural.

When considering how Seneca understands what constitutes nature, it is helpful to consider other philosophical schools' perspectives on the subject, particularly those of the Epicureans and Aristotelians and how they differ.

³⁵⁷ Cf. 1.4.9, 1.9.1, 1.10.1, 1.13.4-5, 1.20.2ff., 1.21.3, 2.6.1-2, 2.12.2.

³⁵⁸ Cf. Cic. *Fin.* 3.26, 3.30; Diog. Laert. 7.87ff.; Stob. *Ecl.* 2.7.6e. For *secundum naturam*, see pp. 12-4.

While the relation of anger to nature remains an important consideration for the Epicureans, they view it differently to Stoic philosophers. They distinguish two different forms of anger which are bad and good accordingly. 'Empty anger' is based on false beliefs, it is evil and destructive, whereas 'natural anger', which affects all men, including the Epicurean Sage,³⁵⁹ involves the proper assessment of the injury and is both necessary and good (cf. Phld. *Ir.* 37.20ff., 40.7, 40.10).³⁶⁰ Anger is considered to be natural in four ways in reference to the biological and cognitive components. Firstly, anger is advantageous, its absence is harmful and therefore unnatural (Phld. *Ir.* 39.26-38). Secondly, it derives from and accords with the correct understanding of things and the accurate appraisal of factors involved in anger-provoking situations (Phld. *Ir.* 37.20-38.9). Thirdly, it is a 'sound, unperfected reaction to intentional offence.'³⁶¹ Finally, it is unavoidable like pain and death (Phld. *Ir.* 40.17-22).

From an Epicurean perspective, in the case of 'natural anger', it is evil not to be susceptible to it: without it, there is no protection or self-defence, both of which are considered to be goods according to the Epicureans. A man with a good disposition does not have wrong opinions about losses and punishment.³⁶² Indeed, for great men, some forms of anger are unavoidable and all humans are vulnerable to anger, as they are to pain and death. By contrast, the anger of an irascible man is not natural because it is caused by false beliefs: about the offender, the magnitude of the offence and appropriate revenge (Phld. *Ir.* 6.14-5). These errors in thinking are responsible for long term, repeated and hereditary anger (Phld. *Ir.* 30.13-24), especially anger that is violent and intense (Phld. *Ir.* 44.5-10). When anger takes this form, a man does not listen to the offender's defence, partly because of false beliefs about the situation (Phld. *Ir.* 23.20-4). Such a man is advised against political participation because he is unable to keep

³⁵⁹ Cf. Phld. *Ir.* 40.17ff., 40.26-41.8, 41.17-25.

³⁶⁰ Cf. Armstrong (2008) pp. 100-4.

³⁶¹ Cf. Tsouna (2007a) p. 225.

³⁶² Asmis (2011) recognises that the emphasis on losses (in reference to the self and others) in relation to anger 'is not found in other analyses of anger' (p.164).

secrets and may involve himself in conspiracies (Phld. *Ir.* 25.15-21).³⁶³ The irascible man is incapable of forming even superficial relationships or sustaining ordinary interaction (Phld. *Ir.* 21.20-40) and his anti-social behaviour leads to theft of his belongings (Phld. *Ir.* 22.24ff.) and a life of intense loneliness (Phld. *Ir.* 22.27-8). Anger from irascibility is a '*merciless, savage, and harsh disposition... to which the emotion is conjoined*' (Phld. *Ir.* 27.19-23). These views of anger are in line with Seneca's insistence that *ira* is not compatible with a harmonious community.

In comparison, Aristotle was less concerned with the division of anger into types. Instead, in a general sense, contrary to the opinions of Seneca, he believed not only that anger was good, but that, in certain forms, it was necessary for virtue. He argued that the excess of anger is '*a kind of irascibility*' (Arist. *Eth. Nic.* 1125b29), the deficiency is '*a kind of inirascibility*' (Arist. *Eth. Nic.* 1126a4) and the mean – the virtue – is '*good temper*' or '*mildness*' (Arist. *Eth. Nic.* 1108a5-9).³⁶⁴ Good temper involves a stable disposition which has the ability to display anger, for its own sake, recognising that it is correct to do so on a particular occasion: (Arist. *Eth. Nic.* 1125b32). Such moderation is considered an ethical virtue necessary for *eudaimonia*: those who are not angry when they should be are considered fools (Arist. *Eth. Nic.* 1126a5). In this respect, Aristotle's good man must, by definition, be capable of anger as acceptance of or overlooking insults to oneself, family or friends is '*slavish*' (Arist. *Eth. Nic.* 1126a9). This is because achieving vengeance is considered to be a way of redressing the balance and re-establishing one's power and status in light of an inappropriate slight. Good temper is ruled by reason which directs passions appropriately and, in the case of anger, most significantly without being vengeful: a good man is only angered by those who ought to show him respect and do not.

³⁶³ Cf. Phld. *Ir.* 14.29-33, 26.14-25.

³⁶⁴ Vernezze (2007) describes Aristotelian anger as lying between 'uncontrolled rage and imperturbable equanimity' (p.6).

Having established the different philosophical perspectives about anger, I return to Seneca's understanding of its naturalness. He compares the ideal of human nature with the reality of anger. He contrasts anger with the natural state of man who is calm, loving, and helpful, to conclude that as anger is its opposite it cannot be in accordance with nature because humans are born to give and receive assistance whereas anger serves to destroy (1.5.2).³⁶⁵ In contrast, anger is focused on punishment (1.5.3) but lacks fairness and justice in the ways it is carried out. While other base passions only affect the worst man, anger comes to even those who are most enlightened and otherwise sane (3.5.1). An individual's disposition and their environment also affect whether and how they become angry. Specific personality types and groups of people prove an important philosophical concern when understanding the nature of passions because by focusing on anger's manifestation, it is possible to gain a greater understanding of its nature, which is necessary when considering if and how it can be avoided. There are certain people who are more prone to anger such as the inherently brave and sturdy, for instance the Germans and Scythians, before they become softened by discipline (2.15.1-2). This echoes Chrysippus' belief that some people are more prone to disease, including sickness of mind (Gal. *PHP* 5.2.3. Cf. *Ep.* 94.13; Cic. *Tusc.* 4.28).

Chrysippus believed that the atmospheric conditions of where individuals live impact on their character, for instance the Athenians are intelligent because of the rarified air and Thebans are overweight because of the air's density (Cic. *Fat.* 7).³⁶⁶ Posidonius too was interested in the atmospheric effect on people's mental states arguing that the mixture of elements affects individual's characters (Gal. *PHP* 5.5.23). Seneca adopts these views when he emphasises the environmental impact on men and shows how anger affects people differently and describes how, typically, nations who have empires are from milder climates and those who live in the North have savage tempers (2.15.5). The physical effects of anger are discussed in the

³⁶⁵ Cf. 2.10.8, 2.31.7, 3.5.6; *Clem.* 1.3.2, 1.25, 2.5.3, 6.3; Cic. *Fin.* 3.62ff.; Cic. *Off.* 1.11-12, 158, 2.73.

³⁶⁶ Cf. Cic. *Nat. D.* 2.17, 42-3.

other philosophical disciplines which influence their understanding of *ira*. Notably, Aristotle offered an important 'scientific' understanding of the causes of anger and its definition as: '*the boiling of the blood and hot stuff round the heart*' (*De an.* 403a30).³⁶⁷ These views influenced later understandings of anger. For instance, some Stoics, such as Chrysippus and Posidonius, argued anger is aroused in the breast by blood boiling around the heart (which is the warmest part of the body) because it is here where Stoics located mental activity, including passions (*Ir.* 2.19.3).³⁶⁸ Seneca adopts this understanding of natural phenomena when he introduces a physics element in his psychological discussion. He explains that the four elements (fire, water, air and earth) have matching properties (hot, cold, dry and moist) and the mingling of these create certain characters (2.19.1-3). Characters are determined by the dominant element, for instance, ardent minds are naturally vulnerable to wrathfulness (2.19.1) and fiery constitutions create wrathful men because '*fire is active and stubborn/actuosus et pertinax ignis*' (2.19.2).

The dominating element and natural tendency towards *ira* varies according to age and condition. For instance, old men are testy and querulous, as are invalids and convalescents and people whose heat has been drained either by exhaustion or by loss of blood (2.19.4). This is an extension of Aristotle's belief that certain bodily conditions lead to a predisposition to anger (*Arist. De an.* 403a21-404). He argued that the pain or frame of mind one is in prior to anger is a decisive factor as to whether anger will erupt (cf. *Arist. Rh.* 1379a10ff.).³⁶⁹ For example, people who are ill, distressed or frustrated are likelier to lose their tempers (*Arist. Rh.* 1379a16-8). External factors which affect the state of the body include alcohol, sickness or injury, exhaustion, anxiety and love affairs (2.19.5-20.1). There is the additional problem of the prevalence of vice in humans (2.9.1). People are, to various degrees, inconsiderate, unthinking, untrustworthy, discontented, ambitious, wicked and intolerant of faults in other people that are shared (3.26.4). Even in

³⁶⁷ Translated by Ackrill (1987) p. 163.

³⁶⁸ Cf. *Gal. PHP* 2.2.8, 2.7.10-11, 3.2.7, 3.5.27-8, 5.1.1-3.

³⁶⁹ Cf. Stocker and Hegeman (1996) p. 279.

institutions designed for justice, evils are present: the courthouses at the forum are full of debased acts, criminals and base lawyers (2.7.3). There are as many vices in public places such as the forum, polling-places and the Circus as there are people (2.8.1. Cf. 2.10.4; *Ep.* 7).

Can anger be moderate?

Seneca rebukes the argument that passion is useful when moderate and states that: '*a moderate passion is simply a moderate evil — modicus adfectus nihil aliud quam malum modicum est*' (1.10.4. Cf. *Ep.* 85.9-10).³⁷⁰ He disagrees with the Peripatetics who believe passions can be moderated (1.7.1. Cf. *Ep.* 116.1) and with Posidonius who also entertained the idea of degrees of vice and passions (Gal. *PHP* 4.5.31-5). Cicero outlined the Peripatetic idea that there is a 'limit' beyond which people should not proceed, but describes this view as being '*feeble and unmanly/mollis et enervata*'. This is because, by definition, there should and cannot be a limit to a fault (Cic. *Tusc.* 4.38).³⁷¹ In addition, when in the throes of passion, it is not possible to stop any more than it is to halt when running down a hill (2.35.2. Cf. *Ep.* 40.7).³⁷² Instead, Seneca argues in absolute terms that all anger should be banished because it is not profitable (2.13.3).³⁷³ The absence of anger makes it easier to remove crimes, punish the wicked and guide them on the straight path, all in a more just manner. The Sage can accomplish his duties without evil and does not associate himself with anything which requires cautious care (2.13.3). This sentiment is later repeated when Seneca demands that anger is entirely extirpated from the roots to prevent it from returning (3.42.1). A sensible public man would not become angry if insulted, because to do so would be an offence to one's dignity.³⁷⁴ Seneca insists that anger should be abolished for two particular reasons. Firstly, it is easier to remove than rule passions (1.7.2. Cf. 1.8.1ff.)

³⁷⁰ However, Seneca implies that grief can be moderated cf. *Ep.* 63.1; *Marc.* 7.1-2; *Poly.* 4.3, 18.5-6. Cf. Manning (1974) p. 71.

³⁷¹ Cf. Cic. *Tusc.* 3.22, 4.39-42; Plut. *Mor.* 443C.

³⁷² Cf. Cic. *Tusc.* 4.41-2. For Chrysippus' analogy of a runner unable to stop, see p. 67.

³⁷³ Cf. Cic. *Tusc.* 3.13, 4.43, 4.57.

³⁷⁴ Cf. Harris (2001, 2004) p. 221.

and secondly, reason only maintains control when it is separated from passions (1.7.3).

Is anger powerful?

Seneca seeks to refute the belief that anger is powerful. An unnamed interlocutor argues that anger is beneficial because it offers protection from being despised and intimidates wicked people (2.11.1). However, Seneca argues in the same passage that if the power of anger is equal to its threats, it is to be hated as much as it is terrible because it is more dangerous to be feared than scorned. But if anger is powerless, it is more likely to arouse contempt and ridicule. Nothing is sillier and feebler than anger '*huffing and puffing/tumultuante*' (2.11.1) and despite the powerful effect anger has over its victims, it is not itself powerful (1.17.4). Seneca compares *ira* with natural elements and claims that like the wind, which appears powerful, anger is only short-lived in its strength (1.17.4. Cf. *QNat.* 5.8). While anger starts forcefully, it ceases in exhaustion so that by the time one comes to avenge, it is weak (cf. 1.17.5-1.17.6) making it a feminine and childish vice (1.20.3. Cf. Plut. *Mor.* 458D). Anger may be universally destructive, cause dramatic personality changes and loss of control, but it is not powerful in the abstract. It is given power by the agent and thus its 'power' can also be removed or never granted in the first place, which is exactly what Stoics achieve by stopping anger arising at the point of pre-passions.

Anger first explicitly appears in *De Clementia* with reference to women and to add emphasis to the second-class status of females he compares them to wild beasts (*Clem.* 1.5.5).³⁷⁵ As '*everything weak is by nature given to complaint — inualidum omne natura querulum est*' (1.13.5), it produces inconsistent behaviour (3.35.1ff.). Again, Seneca uses animal metaphors to explain the nature of anger comparing it with the venom of the snake which starts charged but is drained after several bites (1.17.6. Cf. 2.5.3). Anger lacks a solid foundation and is liable to fall as it is based on nothing stable or lasting: it is empty and puffed up (1.20.2. Cf. 1.17.2). Consequently,

³⁷⁵ Cf. Harris (2003) pp. 130ff.

anger achieves little and leads men to behave in a foolish, undignified manner (2.26.2), whether it is manifested in the kicking of chairs or becoming angered at inanimate objects (1.19.4) or the gods (2.27.1) or the weather (2.27.2) or animals (*Clem.* 1.17.1).³⁷⁶ This reinforces the madness of anger and the fact that it robs men of common sense and the responses provided by reason (2.26.3).³⁷⁷

Anger and the Sage

The qualities of a good man and the Sage illustrate the alternatives to anger, presenting a man who neither harms himself nor other people (cf. Cic. *Tusc.* 3.19; Diog. Laert. 7.123). Such a man experiences no pity: he chastises and punishes where necessary because he is just (Diog. Laert. 7.123). A good man, by definition, will always act appropriately in a calm, deliberated manner. He will avenge the murder of family members, not through grief, but because it is the right thing to do (1.12.1-2. Cf. 1.12.5). He will not hate an angry man because he recognises that the latter is acting out of error. The good man's regular self-reflection has made him realise that he too errs and that it is right to judge others by the same standards (1.14.2). Seneca concludes that it is more humane to recognise individuals' weaknesses and be compassionate to others who err by responding with kindness and fatherly love (1.14.3).

Epicureans take a different view. While their Sage never experiences bad 'empty anger', he does experience 'natural anger', which is compatible with moral perfection.³⁷⁸ Their Sage resorts to anger to forestall the aggressor or to save a friend from being harmed or harming himself.³⁷⁹ He never becomes very angry, as he is never very hurt, because he does not attach value to externals.³⁸⁰ The Sage differs from the ordinary man as he does

³⁷⁶ Despite the value Aristotle attached to anger, even he recognised that there can be errors arising because of it cf. Arist. *Eth. Eud.* 1149a24-31, 1223b18-25, 1125b26-1126b10; Arist. *Pol.* 1312b26-8.

³⁷⁷ Vivid examples of similar behaviour of the enraged man can be found throughout Phld. *Ir.* 10.19-26, 12.22-5, 12.33-40, 13.3-11, 26.4-27 cf. Tsouna (2007a) pp. 213-4.

³⁷⁸ Cf. Phld. *Ir.* 36.13-5, 38.1-6, 39.7, 45.5-15; Tsouna (2011) pp. 195-6.

³⁷⁹ Cf. Phld. *Ir.* 40.26-41.8, 41.17-25.

³⁸⁰ Cf. Phld. *Ir.* 42.2-11, 43.18-24, 47.27-39.

not suffer their mental disturbance and remains tranquil when angry.³⁸¹ In contrast to the Epicurean ideal, the Stoic Sage avoids anger because it would never cease as its sources are abundant (2.6.3. Cf. 2.7-9). He understands the injustice and danger of becoming angry at universal sinners (2.10.4) and acknowledges that prior to perfection he was a sinner, making the common errors of youthfulness (3.25.2. Cf. 2.10.6; *Clem.* 1.6.4). An example of such moral progression is illustrated by Augustus, who in his youth was: '*hot-headed, he blazed with anger/caluit, arsit ira*' and regretted his conduct when he was older (*Clem.* 1.11.1). Augustus illustrates the possibility of character reformation, such as in his leniency towards Lucius Cinna who had plotted his assassination (*ibid.* 1.9) and he became more angry with himself for stirring up irrational emotional responses than with the subject (*ibid.* 1.9.5). This example illustrates how Seneca is demonstrating that anger can be managed, and this is the correct approach to take towards passions.³⁸²

Nonetheless, the Stoic Sage is still slightly moved physically by wrong-doers because he experiences pre-passions which leave scars on his mind (cf. *Ep.* 74.31; *Plut. Mor.* 449A). His skin may be grazed by an external event, and he may be moved, like a light breath of wind, but this will not affect his excellence (*Ep.* 72.5) which is like the other side of the moon that is always calm (*Ep.* 59.16). He will experience the '*shadows/umbras*' of passion but not passion itself, proving it is possible not to advance from the first stages of *adfectus* (1.16.7. Cf. 2.4.2). The Sage does not become angry because he does not attach value to externals (cf. *Ep.* 85; *Constant.* 5.5). The Sage will apply force, not anger, to situations that require strong measures. This could be interpreted as Seneca's contribution to a necessary revision of his contemporary penal system in terms of how justice and punishment were played out.³⁸³ However, these views conflict with those of the Peripatetic, Theophrastus of Eresos, who appears as an interlocutor claiming that good

³⁸¹ Cf. *Phld. Ir.* 40.3-4.

³⁸² Cf. Chapter Three *passim*.

³⁸³ Cf. Harris (2001, 2004) pp. 220-3.

men are angered when their beloved are injured (1.12.3).³⁸⁴ Seneca suggests that this implies people believe their actions when influenced by passions are correct, which is contrary to his personal stance on the subject. Later in the dialogue, Theophrastus comments that good man must be angry with bad men, suggesting that the better someone is, the angrier they would be. Seneca says it is the opposite. The perfect man is the most peaceful, most free from passion and least prone to hatred (1.14.1).³⁸⁵ Like the Sage, men can become invulnerable and above all suffering.³⁸⁶ Then they would not be injured nor become angry. By pursuing the ideal of the Sage and specifically, controlling one's feelings and preventing passions such as anger from arising, people too could benefit from the Sage's way of thinking and behaving and thus achieve *tranquillitas*.

There is a Stoic paradox that only the Sage is a king because only he possesses the art of ruling (SVF 3.694-700).³⁸⁷ Chrysippus argues that the absolute rule of kingship should be the responsibility of Sages alone (cf. Diog. Laert. 7.122);³⁸⁸ a view which Seneca confirms when he quotes Posidonius' view of sovereignty in the Golden Age (cf. *Ep.* 90.5ff.). It is natural for a Sage to be a ruler, particularly because he never becomes angry (*ibid.* 2.6.3). He does not respond to provocation or attach value to externals and experiences *constantiae* not *adfectus*.³⁸⁹ In *De Clementia*, Seneca discusses exactly how the Sage would rule. He considers whether the Sage pardons (*Clem.* 2.7.1), discusses the distinction between pardon

³⁸⁴ Theophrastus' recorded interests ranged widely from botany to biology and physics to ethics and metaphysics. Most relevant to Seneca are his views on ethics where he conflicted most with Stoicism. He insists that happiness depends on external influences as well as on virtue and claimed in the *Callisthenes* that 'life is ruled by fortune, not wisdom' a stance repelled by Stoics. While Seneca may have been using him as a representative of Aristotle's views, he did differ fundamentally from his tutor, for example, in his definitions of pleasure (cf. Diog. Laert. 5.40-41, 44).

³⁸⁵ While Cooper and Procopé (1995) question the accuracy of the quotations because they are not found in Theophrastus' extant texts (p. 30 n. 29). However it is expressed, Seneca insists that the Peripatetic view conflicts with Stoicism and is incorrect (1.12.3).

³⁸⁶ Cf. *Clem.* 2.5.4; *Ep.* 9.2-4; 22.15; 66.18ff.; 72.4.

³⁸⁷ Cf. Young (1935).

³⁸⁸ Cf. Stob. *Ecl.* 2.7 108, 26 (SVF 3.617).

³⁸⁹ Frede (1986) describes the Sage's relationship with feelings: 'Thus the Stoic sage does not gain his equanimity by shedding human concerns, but by coming to realise what these concerns are meant to be, and hence what they ought to be, namely the means by which nature maintains its natural, rational order' (p. 110).

and clemency (*ibid.* 2.7.3), shows the practicality of Stoic advice to a ruler and explains how the Sage shows no pity (*ibid.* 2.5.4. Cf. *ibid.* 2.6.2). Instead, he will assist others as he was: '*born to benefit the community and for the common good — in commune auxilium natus ac bonum publicum*' (*ibid.* 2.6.3). The Stoic Sage is not vengeful, angry or distressed by an attack: he knows that it is the attitude towards the event that is significant, not whether the attack actually occurs. This example teaches how by changing one's opinion about a situation, anger can be avoided.

The question of the usefulness of anger

Anger's use in warfare

The most prevalent argument in favour of anger is that it is useful. This is held by Aristotle and his followers and shared in part by the Epicureans. Aristotle believes that anger is useful and necessary in warfare as a motivation for action (1.7.1).³⁹⁰ Seneca paraphrases Aristotle's argument that anger is necessary for victory and it must dominate the mind and urge the spirit (1.9.2. Cf. Arist. *Eth. Nic.* 1116b23-1117a9).³⁹¹ Aristotle promoted the corrective value of anger and considers that it is necessary for justice. He believed that appropriate anger is protective because it enables defence of self, friends and family from being treated as worthless and from having their goals hindered and that this is a good thing (*Eth. Nic.* 1125b27-1126a32).³⁹² Stoics, on the other hand, believe that justice and protection can be achieved without this vice and virtue is necessary to secure these.

Aristotle is ascribed the view that certain passions can be used as weapons, whereas Seneca argues that this cannot be the case. This is because, by definition, passions cannot be controlled and put aside on demand (1.17.1). They can only be prevented from arising. Later, Aristotle is described by Seneca as a defender and preserver of anger, claiming that without it the mind will become defenceless, sluggish and indifferent to ambition (3.3.1). Similarly, while trying to reassure his brother Novatus that criticism of anger

³⁹⁰ Cf. Cic. *Tusc.* 4.43, 4.48-52; *Phid. Ir.* 31.24-34.6.

³⁹¹ Cooper and Procopé (1995) p. 27, n. 24.

³⁹² Cf. *Eth. Nic.* 1117a6ff.; Arist. *Rh.* 1378b, 1379a.

is an important subject, Seneca mentions a '*distinguished philosopher/aliquis et quidem de inlustribus philosophis*' which is universally accepted to be Aristotle, ascribing to anger a function in the state because it is useful and motivating for war or for that which requires eagerness (3.3.5). Seneca uses the example of one of Aristotle's pupils, Alexander the Great, as a negative portrayal of anger to demonstrate how the king does not manage his passions. For instance, when in c328BC Alexander stabbed his closest oldest friend, Clitus, in the middle of a banquet and threw his bodyguard Lysimachus to a lion (3.17.1). This is possibly to suggest a connection between the philosopher's unsound views of anger and the king's behaviour as well as illustrating, through a known *exemplum*, why it is important to fully comprehend the true nature of *ira* and the methods through which it can be managed.

For Seneca, anger is never acceptable and even when people need to be roused, for example, in the law courts and in oratory, only feigned anger should be used because it is important not to have disruptive anger in these contexts where reason is so important to facilitate appropriate judgements where justice is demanded (2.14.1. Cf. 2.17.1).³⁹³ This might be interpreted to suggest that righteous anger has a place to achieve goals, and is therefore useful, for example to persuade someone of the correct way to think and behave when they are otherwise being unreasonable. However, although such an approach is a possibility for other philosophers, the usual Stoic view is that anger is not a helpful passion and that it is possible to achieve better results without it. Seneca notes that men respect level-headedness (3.41.2 Cf. 1.12.5). The interlocutor shares Peripatetic beliefs that a mind devoid of anger is inert (2.17.2). However, Seneca refutes such a claim. Virtue is self-sufficient, '*the supreme good calls for no practical aids from outside — Summum bonum extrinsecus instrumenta non quaerit*' (*Ep.* 9.15) and nature provides everything humans require (*Ep.* 90.16). When there is need for violence the mind can provide the necessary motivation

³⁹³ Cf. Cic. *Tusc.* 4.55. In a similar vein, Philodemus noted that it is possible to have the appearance of irascibility without being an irascible person (*Phld. Ir.* 34.16, 34.30-6, 34.39-35.5). This is the case of a Sage when rebuking pupils for their improvement (*Phld. Ir.* 35.17-40).

without passion but using reason instead which is impossible in anger (1.9.1. Cf. 1.17.2).³⁹⁴

Anger does not make men more warlike: if that were true it would be the same for drunkenness and madness, which make men bold and powerful in the same way (1.13.3). Indeed, anger hinders the success of fighting because, although it is the most eager for vengeance of the passions, it is '*too hasty and witless/prae rapida et amens*' and creates destruction from calm (1.12.5). As a passion, anger causes rash, disordered thinking which distorts rational assessments and strategic planning rather than a reasoned, pragmatic approach necessary for successful assault, as is evidenced by the failures in angry barbarians and gladiators (1.11.1. Cf. 1.11.8). Seneca insists that, to ensure no one mistakenly believes that anger at a certain time and place is profitable: '*its unbridled, lunatic frenzy must be made plain — ostendenda est rabies eius effrenata*' (3.3.6). Cicero makes a similar point when he rhetorically asked whether insanity can be useful (Cic. *Tusc.* 4.79). The question arises as to whether in emotive situations, anger is an important motivator to prompt change, to counteract a grievance, to instil order among barbarians or to protect one's country. If anger is not necessary or appropriate, an alternative must exist. For Stoics, these are '*good feelings*' or *constantiae* which are grounded in reason and reflect the true good, including joy, caution and wishing, all of which are appropriate feelings based on true beliefs (cf. *Ep.* 23.4-6). Action depends on experiencing some feeling or want to respond to a situation to create improvement of the current state of affairs, be it in the personal or public realm. In principle, the Stoic love of mankind and their goal to encourage rational behaviour is sufficient motivation for all action.

Seneca's disagreement with Aristotelians over the usefulness of anger is also echoed by the Epicureans, and Philodemus attacks Aristotelians for encouraging anger (Phld. *Ir.* 31.24-34.6). Philodemus believed that it is possible to fight bravely and defeat an enemy without anger (Phld. *Ir.* 32.36)

³⁹⁴ Cf. Cic. *Tusc.* 4.49-50; van Hoof (2007) pp. 67-8.

and that someone is more likely to suffer injury if fighting in anger (Phld. *Ir.* 32.39). He continued to argue that angry soldiers are incautious and therefore weakened (Phld. *Ir.* 32.39-33.7), are more likely to disobey their general (Phld. *Ir.* 33.25-8), cause damage and be reckless (Phld. *Ir.* 33.28-34). Indeed, empty anger makes vengeance and punishment difficult to carry out (Phld. *Ir.* 33.18-20). In addition, anger hinders philosophical development (Phld. *Ir.* 18.35-40). The irascible student is hypersensitive to any criticism, even when it is constructive (Phld. *Ir.* 19.17-25) and becomes so obsessed with vengeance that he is unable to concentrate on his studies or improve his character (Phld. *Ir.* 19.1-8). He becomes engulfed by suspicion (Phld. *Ir.* 21-5) and cannot participate in the common intellectual and moral life demanded by the philosophical School (Phld. *Ir.* 19.25-22.2). Similarly, it is not possible to be irascible and a good teacher (Phld. *Ir.* 20.18-27). These challenges to the Peripatetic view and the negative consequences of anger on which they are based reinforce the importance of identifying anger's limitations on functionality as rational beings, thus reinforcing the need for their removal.

Anger's use in punishment

In the same way anger is unhelpful in warfare, it has no proper place in just punishment and therefore serves no use. The focus of anger is the punishment of the offender to avenge apparent injury. Not only is the judgement erroneous, so too is carrying out punishment in anger. The Epicureans insist that punishment should not be used for revenge or to gain pleasure: the Sage punishes to remedy himself for losses inflicted upon him.³⁹⁵ Seneca disagrees: anger is never honourable. Whereas kindness warrants kindness in return, this is not the case with injuries. Although vengeance is inhumane but is commonly accepted as legitimate, Seneca argues that taking revenge is still wrong even when it is less severe than the original injury (2.32.1). Agreeing with Plato (*Leg.* 11.934A), Seneca proposes that the purpose of punishment is to improve or remove the

³⁹⁵ Men imitate the heroes of myth and gods in anger, even without realising it, when seeking revenge for the sake of honour (Phld. *Ir.* 14.1-6; Cf. Zeus, Phld. *Ir.* 16.12, 43.3; Dionysus, Phld. *Ir.* 16.24; Apollo and Artemis, Phld. *Ir.* 16.19-24). For anger in the Epicurean Sage, see Tsouna (2007a) pp. 228-30; Asmis (2011) p. 165.

wicked because punishment should take forward-looking measures to improve future conduct.³⁹⁶ This view is based on the assumption that people may very well intend to commit crime, but the penal system operates on the assumption that they can be reformed (2.31.8). The good man would only publicly kill someone to make them an example to deter others or as a last resort if they were unsaveable, while in other circumstances they may be exiled (1.19.7. Cf. 1.16.3, 2.31.8). This is the goal for a Sage (Stoic or Epicurean) when exacting punishment. Consequently, the punisher requires reason and good judgement, neither of which is present in anger, which is a *'failure of the mind/delictum animi'* (1.16.1). *Ira* has no place in a fair judicial system because it perverts the correct assessment of individual cases and hinders just sentencing and punishment. People should act like a doctor (who never becomes angry with his patient (1.15.1)), a message Seneca conveys in *De Clementia* where he argues that the need for a good doctor to cure mental failings can be extended to the need for a good ruler (*Clem.* 1.17.1).

In the final book of *De Ira*, Seneca recalls Plato's response to his anger towards his slave to demonstrate that it is possible to control behaviour and that this is necessary considering how anger hinders prescribing justice, indicating that it is not useful (3.12.5ff.). When angered by his slave, Plato was determined to beat him and ordered him to remove his shirt. As soon as he realised he was angry, Plato stopped, leaving his hand with a whip floating in the air. When later asked by a friend what he was doing, he claimed to be punishing an angry man (3.12.5). The story continues that Plato forgot about the slave because he was so angry with himself that he was more anxious to punish himself. He relinquished his power over his household and when he was angry in the future, Plato asked Speusippus (his philosopher nephew) to beat the slave (3.12.6).³⁹⁷ Seneca concludes that Plato did not strike as he was angry because, although this is the reason for others to use violence, the philosopher believed that in anger he would

³⁹⁶ Cf. Harris (2001, 2004) pp. 317-31.

³⁹⁷ For alternative versions of the story, see Diog. Laert. 3.38-9; Plut. *Mor.* 1108A; Val. Max. 4.1. (ext.) 2a.

do more than he should, with great satisfaction, and the slave should not have a master who cannot control himself (3.12.7). Using Plato as an example, Seneca argues that no man should punish when angry and nothing should be lawful in anger because then everything would be lawful. He chooses the examples of Plato and Socrates as renowned philosophers as authorities for his arguments.

Anger as a motivation for punishment is not useful in ascribing fair punishment because while it may satisfy the initial desire for vengeance, it does not produce improvement in either the person responsible for the injury nor the angry person. Seneca proposes an alternative: he quotes Socrates' decision not to beat his slave until his anger has passed (1.15.3) as an example of how a punisher who acts appropriately is not angry, thus reinforcing how *ira* is not useful (1.9.4). This is because anger is unbalanced, capricious, does not listen to defences, is inflexible once it has made a judgement and does not admit when it is wrong (1.17.7. Cf. 1.19.1, 2.6.4). As a result, punishment issued in anger is unfair, with people receiving different punishments for the same crimes, without taking into consideration the motivation for the crime (1.17.7. Cf. 1.19.6). Anger conflicts with reason which makes judgements that are balanced and fair. Consequently, it is particularly important for anger to be absent when capital punishment is involved (1.19.8). In most cases, external punishment is superfluous because remorse is the heaviest punishment, so even when a man is unpunished by the injured, he does not escape reprimand (3.26.2). A Stoic outlook, and one which Seneca appears to be advocating, emphasises the importance of rationality guiding both present and future conduct, so that all situations can be responded to consistently and correctly. Seneca explicitly states that injuries should not be repaid with injury ('*repensare...iniurias iniuriis*' 2.32.1) nor wrongs be met with wrongs ('*vitia vitiis opponere*' 3.27.1). This shows how Seneca is promoting and encouraging *humanitas*, a genuine concern for other people's well-being, independent of social and cultural refinement and personal gain (2.32.1. Cf.

Ep. 88.30).³⁹⁸ Stoic concern for humanity was such that they wished to share their wisdom to help everyone flourish and become virtuous (*Ep.* 48.8ff.).

In a similar vein, Seneca cites the conservative senator and statesman and the most famous Stoic in the Late Republic, Marcus Porcius Cato (b95BC) being hit while in the public baths by a man who did not know who he was. When he apologised, Cato denied the incident, thinking it better to ignore than resent it (2.32.2) and when the man asked if he were to receive a punishment, instead he benefited from getting to know Cato. Seneca concludes that: '*It's the mark of a great spirit to regard wrongs as beneath contempt — Magni animi est iniurias despiceré*' (2.32.3). Similarly, Cleanthes was applauded for being unmoved when he was publicly ridiculed by the poet Sositheus (Diog. Laert. 7.173) and ignored mockery for his comparative slowness in learning (Plut. *Mor.* 47E. Cf. Diog. Laert. 7.170). To reinforce his argument, Seneca quotes Plato (*Resp.* 1.335D): "*A good man,*" he says, "*causes no harm*" — "*Vir bonus*" inquit "*non laedit*" and concludes that as punishment injures, it is not consistent with good but with anger, making anger contrary to nature (1.6.5). As well as being a corrective remedy for the offender, punishment can benefit the punisher: it should be used as an opportunity for self-reflection of one's actions, so that previous behaviour can be fairly and honestly judged (2.27.4). *Clementia* is particularly relevant to exacting punishment which is carried out to avenge oneself or someone else (*Clem.* 1.20.1), for correction, improvement or to remove the wicked for greater good (*ibid.* 1.22.1). Seneca is not proposing that punishment should be removed: rather that a different sort of conception of what punishment seeks to achieve is required.

Anger's use for virtue

In addition to considering the impact of anger and its role in punishment, Seneca's discussion about whether anger is useful includes ethical considerations because his concern is whether it has use for virtue. He argues that anger is not present in great souls (cf. 1.20.2, 1.20.4-7, 1.21.1)

³⁹⁸ Cf. Pratt (1983) pp. 69-70.

because virtue (on which greatness depends) cannot co-exist with vice because the former is the only good (1.8.3).³⁹⁹ It is not possible to be angry and clement, because the latter is wholly rational and incorruptible by passion.⁴⁰⁰ Seneca confirms this when he states that anger is the source of cruelty and that recurrent and excessive anger ignores mercy and human compassion (2.5.3). The argument is reinforced through rhetorical questions to persuade that passions should be eradicated by directing his reader to believe that nothing is more tranquil than a peaceful mind nor more relaxed than mercy, but cruelty is the most taxing (2.13.2. Cf. 2.12.6). To illustrate his point and to make it more accessible to his readers, Seneca cites examples where great leaders demonstrate *clementia* in the face of anger: he praises Alexander because he was prone to anger and as self-control is rare in kings it is more praiseworthy (2.23.3). Praise is also offered to Julius Caesar, who used his victory in civil war mercifully by burning inflammatory letters to Gnaeus Pompeius and although he indulged in anger, he preferred not being so and believed the most gracious form of pardon was ignorance of the offence (2.23.4. Cf. 2.10.4). Seneca comments on the nobility of *clementia* and its value in a palace when it is directly compared with anger in order to persuade his readers of the value of an alternative response (*Clem.* 1.5.4).

Seneca presents how *ira* is deceptive in its conviction by exposing it as being the opposite to what it may first appear. While anger gives the impression of greatness in its speech and outward display (1.20.8), it consists of nothing great or noble (1.21.1). Its physical manifestation demonstrates a lack of decorum, a threat to an individual's dignity and respect for self and other people.⁴⁰¹ It is '*puny and petty/pusilla est et angusta*' (3.5.7) and '*pinched, wretched and base/angusta sunt, misera depressa*' (1.21.4). Its inefficacy demonstrates how anger is not suited to a

³⁹⁹ Cf. 1.4.9, 1.9.1, 1.10.1, 2.12.2, 1.13.4-5, 1.21.3, 2.6.1-2, 2.12.2.

⁴⁰⁰ In contrast, Aristotelian anger is connected to greatness of mind. Aristotle promotes a refusal to tolerate insult as an indication of a man's excellence. He uses Achilles as an example of a man who depends on and demands recognition of his greatness from his peers (cf. *An. post.* 97b15-26).

⁴⁰¹ Cf. 1.19.4, 2.26.2, 2.27.1-2; *Clem.* 1.17.1.

king because it precludes his superiority to his subjects and those to whom his anger is directed (*Clem.* 1.5.6). Anger is unhelpful because it makes a king's behaviour reflect the brawls of the plebs (*ibid.* 1.7.4) demonstrating that he is not governing with the virtue expected of him. This reference to people of low status is part of a discussion about the differences between private individuals and rulers' retribution and Seneca's attempt to show that *clementia* is a strength not a weakness.

III Anger in Senecan tragedy

Anger is a common theme in tragedies since these often tell the story of how individuals' emotional struggles and moral failings destroy lives. By comparing Seneca's vision of *ira* outlined in his prose with its presentation in his tragedies, a fuller picture of anger can be explored both from philosophical considerations and how he responds to non-philosophical attitudes towards it. The causes of anger listed in *De Ira* are largely consistent with *Medea* and *Thyestes*. In *Thyestes*, the progress of *ira* can be tracked in Atreus; even though he admits his disposition to anger (he is an angry tyrant (*Thy.* lines 176ff.)), he becomes aware of the pre-passions (cf. 2.4.1) in the form of stirrings in his heart '*tumultus pectora... quatit*' as his anger grows stronger (lines 260-2. Cf. '*tumet*' lines 268). Evidence of the formation of passions Seneca details in *De Ira* is less clear in *Medea* because the play opens with a woman in rage whose anger grows across the course of the acts. However, for this situation to have arisen, according to Seneca's understanding of the formation of passions, she must have assented to a false opinion to become angry, i.e. that Jason's behaviour has caused her harm – when from a Stoic outlook it could not – and that this warrants vengeful action (cf. 2.3.5; 2.31.1).⁴⁰² She complains how she is dragged in different directions by a '*changing swelling/anceps aestus*' (*Med.* line 939) which can be interpreted to be indicating the effect of passions changing the tension of her soul as many Stoics believe (cf. Diog. Laert. 7.114.). Seneca reveals little about Medea's education to indicate who and what experiences have shaped her opinions other than her belief that a ruler

⁴⁰² For Seneca's understanding of the formation of passions, see pp. 79-81.

should be just, as she demonstrates in her pleading for a fair hearing to Creon (lines 199f.). Her angry disposition and propensity to violence is revealed by herself in the recounting of previous crimes (cf. lines 129-36, 483-9) and her desire for greater penalties in her future actions (cf. lines 44-55, 423-4, 976ff.). The susceptibility to anger indicated by her personality makes Medea a particularly dangerous individual, for she is presented as someone with a temperament such that it would be harder for her to overcome the passion.

In both plays, anger is the result of a disappointment of the expectations of family members (cf. 3.6.4; Cic. *Tusc.* 4.77), because of the injury the protagonists experienced from them (cf. 2.1.3-4; 2.3.1ff.; 2.31.1-3) and the fear of potential harm in the future (cf. 1.3.1; 2.26.1). Medea and Atreus are governed by passion because of the slights they have received. For Medea, this was the separation from and the proposed remarriage of Jason: for Atreus, the infidelity of his wife with his brother, the question over the paternity of his sons Agamemnon and Menelaus (*Thy.* line 240) and his subsequent usurpation. The shame that this has caused them and also their (arguably) mistaken perceptions about how these things will in fact influence them, leads to distorted and disproportionate responses to the initial 'crimes' against them (cf. 2.2.2).⁴⁰³

Prior to meeting Jason, as an innocent *virgo*, Medea was a powerful, respected Colchian princess of divine heritage with many suitors (*Med.* lines 217-8. Cf. lines 206ff.). Consequently, she does not believe that she deserves the humiliation and persecution from Jason's remarriage and this has sparked her rage, a cause of anger which is confirmed in *De Ira* where Seneca argues that arrogance or ignorance produces an inclination to anger (2.31.4). Heroic sentiments reminiscent of military morale and shame culture communicated by the old Greek heroic maxim 'harm thy enemies' and the Aristotelian stance which Seneca rebukes underlie Medea's revenge: she believes that she should commit evil and it would be wrong

⁴⁰³ Cf. Littlewood (2004) p. 180.

not to.⁴⁰⁴ She aspires to resolve her status through aggressive ‘masculine’ violence typical of ancient heroes (cf. *Med.* lines 42-3). (She is also merciless and deceptive (cf. lines 266-8, 285f., 553f.)). It is reasonable to assume this transgender move is because a woman’s stereotypical softness prevents her from carrying out violent acts. Perhaps unsurprisingly, as it is addressed to a man, there are no *exempla* of women’s rage in *De Ira*, even though anger is referred to as being a ‘womanish vice/muliebre ... uitium est’ which men are prone to, a description which seeks to belittle *ira*’s power (1.20.3).

Medea and Atreus presume that through acts carried out in anger they can recover their status because of the catastrophic consequences of this passion.⁴⁰⁵ They believe that it is imperative to their self and public image that, in response to being slighted, they regain public acknowledgement of their strength.⁴⁰⁶ Medea is seeking innovation in her punishment (*‘haut usitatum’ Med.* line 899) and strives for recognition and immortality through her crimes, threatening to ‘blast the gods// And shake the world — *Inuadam deos// et cuncta quatiam*’ (lines 423-4. Cf. lines 45ff.),⁴⁰⁷ where the military connotations of ‘*inuadam*’ can be seen in the alternative translations of it as ‘*attack*’ and ‘*assault*’.⁴⁰⁸ Atreus seeks to restore his political and social standing believing that security in power would mean that his revenge has been successful (lines 887-8. Cf. lines 911-2, 971-2). Consequently, he devises a revenge plot to ensure that his name will be remembered by future generations for its innovation (lines 56-57. Cf. lines 192ff., 256-7, 266ff.) and his success is confirmed by the Messenger’s declaration that this is the case (line 754).⁴⁰⁹

⁴⁰⁴ Cf. 1.3.2, 1.5.3; Arist. *Eth. Nic.* 1111a32ff., 1125b30ff.

⁴⁰⁵ Cf. 1.2.1-3, 1.19.2, 2.9.2; Mattern-Parkes (2001) pp. 178-80.

⁴⁰⁶ Cf. Littlewood (2004) pp. 180-3.

⁴⁰⁷ Cf. Benton (2003) p. 278.

⁴⁰⁸ Cf. Sall. *Iug.* 32.4, 35.

⁴⁰⁹ Atreus is not entirely innovative. He was inspired by the myth of Procne (wife of the Thracian king Tereus) who killed and cooked her son Itys in revenge for the king’s outrage upon her sister Philomela (*Thy.* lines 274ff. Cf. lines 56-7). This story is recalled by Ovid in *Met.* 6.412-674. Seneca also reports the King of Persia who serves Harpagus’ sons at a banquet in *Ir.* 3.4.

Having their vengeful deeds witnessed adds gravitas to the 'achievement' of successful retribution and an audience for their criminality is paralleled in athletic games and war, which were a means to obtain recognition.⁴¹⁰ Atreus and Medea's priorities conflict with a Stoic perspective which argues that recognition and fame should not be prime motivators. Atreus orders his slaves to open the doors for more people to see Thyestes' horror at what he has eaten when he unknowingly consumed his sons (*Thy.* lines 901ff.). Atreus is delighted that the gods have fled so that he will not become subject to any punitive intervention, but he wishes they were present to have seen the horror of the banquet to add importance to his deed (lines 893-6). This is reminiscent of Medea's disappointment that Jason did not see the murder of the first child and her belief that her crime was wasted because of his absence, making her determined that he will see the second son die (*Med.* lines 992ff.). The desire for an audience is reinforced by Medea's assertion that deeds should be applauded '*approba populo manum*' (line 977), showing the need for other people's acknowledgement of her actions to enhance her self-importance. Even though anger is by nature irrational and provokes impulsive reactions, Medea and Atreus apply perverted reason to plan their revenges to ensure a sense of visibility but this is not reason in the Stoic sense of true reason aiming at good.

Seneca has demonstrated how unreasonable punishments are carried out in anger, (cf. 1.1.2) confirming how *ira* is unsuited to punishment,⁴¹¹ not only because of the errors in the initial judgement of a situation which causes passions, but also because wickedness should not cause anger (1.6). However, in a dramatic context, the extremity of unreasonable punishment is exacerbated and goes beyond 'an eye for an eye': Medea and Atreus seek revenge by planning long-term punishment by killing their enemies' children which will have a permanent impact on Jason and Thyestes

⁴¹⁰ Cf. Braden (1970) for a discussion of the importance of competition, games and trophies alluded to in *Thy.* lines 54-6, 407-10, 659-62, 1097 (pp. 31-3). Stocker and Hegeman (1996) discuss the 'social relations' and 'social ordering' implied by Aristotle's definition of anger which is also applicable to Atreus: 'Aristotle's depiction of anger and those who get angry shows us men who are concerned with their importance, dignity, and with the honor and respect all or some others owe them' (p. 267).

⁴¹¹ Cf. 1.9.4, 1.10.1, 1.14-6, 1.17.7, 1.19.5ff., 2.6.4, 2.31.8.

respectively. The protagonists' actions are contrary to fair punishment, which, guided by reason, seeks to reform the individual.⁴¹² There is no desire to allow the offenders to redeem themselves in the plays, even when they acknowledge their guilt (cf. Jason in *Med.* lines 1004ff.; Thyestes in *Thy.* lines 512ff.). This illustrates how anger breeds cruelty and when it is persistent, it ignores compassion (2.5.3), which is contrary to the intrinsic quality of humans who pardon those who err (2.10.2). Anger escalates quickly and can start off being directed at one individual but magnifies to encompass ill-feeling towards many innocent people (3.28.1) as both the Corinthians in *Medea* and Argives in *Thyestes* suffer from the loss of heirs and the extensive destruction which is caused by Medea and Atreus' revenge. *Ira* in the plays is as vile in its social impact as it is in its physicality.⁴¹³ Medea's *ira* destroys her family and instils fear across Corinth, leaving the physical damage of burnt buildings with the political problem of the deaths of the royal family and the killing of innocent children.

The protagonists murder the people closest to them, destroying everything they would be expected to cry for, validating Seneca's arguments about the danger that anger can cause to children whose limbs are scattered by befouled hands (3.41.3). Such behaviour evidences Seneca's argument that anger is heartless (cf. 3.3.3) and contrary to the natural state of man, who is calm, loving and helpful (cf. 1.5.2, 3.5.6), thus proving that it is unnatural (1.5.1ff.). *Ira* lasts longer than the initial hurt (3.27.1) and is self-perpetuating, with 'victims' seeking retribution after every instance of 'injury'. References to '*hereditary crime/alterna vice*' (*Thy.* line 25. Cf. lines 18-9, 22, 28ff., 40ff., 133) and alternate rule by the brothers '*to shed each other's blood/alternis dare sanguinem*' (line 340. Cf. lines 37f., 139f.) are voiced from the outset of *Thyestes*. This reflects the lack of closure in the play, with the anticipation of Thyestes' future retaliation (line 1112. Cf. line 311). Similar sentiments can be found in Medea's opening soliloquy which ends with the comment that a house born in crime should remain so suggesting a life of turmoil for the royal family is deserved (*Med.* line 55).

⁴¹² Cf. 1.6, 1.15, 1.16.2, 1.18, 1.19.7, 2.27.4, 2.31.8.

⁴¹³ Cf. 1.2.1-3, 2.9, 2.36.5, 3.2, 3.20.1ff.; *Clem.* 1.25.2-5, 1.26.1-2.

The protagonists' actions confirm that anger is sadistic and gains pleasure from inflicting suffering and death as Seneca presents in his prose (2.32.1).⁴¹⁴ Medea claims that her retribution brings her great joy (*'pars ultionis ista, qua gaudes, quota est'* *Med.* line 896) and delights (*'iuuat, iuuat'*) in her old crimes (lines 911ff. Cf. *'voluptas magna me invitam subi'* lines 991-2). Atreus punishes for pleasure, not necessity (cf. *Thy.* lines 903-7, 1097-8) and defines himself by harming other people.⁴¹⁵ Atreus is delighted by the sight of his brother's distress (lines 903ff.) and remains unhappy until he sees Thyestes suffer (lines 889ff. Cf. lines 1053, 1067ff.).⁴¹⁶ He takes this misery as confirmation of the accomplishment of his vengeance (lines 906ff.).⁴¹⁷ When he is convinced his sons are his, which secures the regal line (lines 1097-8), Atreus feels Thyestes' original crimes have now been erased (lines 1099), in the same way that Medea believes that killing her sons has restored her previous regal status and declares that her virginity has returned (*'rediere regna, rapta virginitas redit'* *Med.* line 984. Cf. lines 982ff.).⁴¹⁸ This pleasure from punishing others in these plays is similarly present in *De Ira*: the Persian King Cambyses was pleased to have taken a new form of punishment by severing the noses of a whole population in Syria (3.20.1).

The physicality of the mad and angry man described as visually grotesque in *De Ira* surfaces in descriptions of the characters in Seneca's plays.⁴¹⁹ Medea's frenzied movements reflect her agitated state of mind as is apparent from the Nurse's report that Medea wildly dashes around, with a frenzied and furious expression, flaming cheeks, howling with tears and smiles evidencing every passion and: *'She falters, threatens, seethes, laments, moans — haeret minatur aestuat queritur gemit'* (*Med.* lines 385-

⁴¹⁴ Cf. 2.5.2ff., 3.5.5, 3.43.4; *Clem.* 1.10.3; Littlewood (2004) pp. 191-4.

⁴¹⁵ Cf. Tobin (1966) pp. 68, 70; Dodson-Robinson (2010) p. 65; Staley (2010) pp. 21-2.

⁴¹⁶ Cf. Mader (2010).

⁴¹⁷ Rose (1986-1987) interprets Atreus' 'success' as a cynical expression of mankind: 'Atreus' unqualified victory over Thyestes offers a pessimistic view of a world in which the only valid form of government is cruel despotism, where the voices of reason favoring a more humane use of power are either ignored or suppressed, and where even philosophical indifference is not left untroubled' (p. 128).

⁴¹⁸ Cf. Littlewood (2004) pp. 201-3.

⁴¹⁹ Cf. 1.1.4ff.; 2.35.5, 3.4.1-2, 3.5.1-2; Evans (1950) pp. 175-7.

90).⁴²⁰ Medea's superhuman powers and divination are physically illustrated by loose hair and bare feet akin to a witch (line 752), reflecting the unkempt appearance of the angry man in *De Ira* (2.35.3). Medea is aware of the connection between anger and madness when she motivates herself to be armed with wrath in preparation to kill in full frenzy (lines 51-2). Like Aristotle and the Epicureans, Medea sees anger as a motivation for action.⁴²¹ However, anger imprisons men as its slave, as can be seen by Medea's obsession with it (cf. 1.7.3, 3.4.4).

The characters' rational responses are impeded by anger (cf. 2.26.3). Medea complains that she is thrown in all directions '*Restless, crazed, demented — incerta uecors mente non sana*' (*Med.* lines 123-4).⁴²² She announces the '*full frenzy/furore toto*' of her anger (line 52), describes her '*mad soul/furiose*' (line 897. Cf. lines 990ff.) and shows that anger causes self-harm, both physically (cf. 2.36.5-6) and mentally (cf. 3.4.4) when she slashes her wrists at the altar to win Hecate's support (lines 806ff.).⁴²³ In these respects, Medea illustrates Seneca's warning that the angry person is afraid (cf. 2.11.3-4), showing that the retaliator is harmed by *ira* as much as the victims.⁴²⁴ This is reinforced by the Chorus' recognition that anger is a '*blind fire/caecus...ignis*' which seeks death rather than fearing it (lines 591-4). While Medea questions whether she should kill her sons, she recognises that she is out of control with '*mad rage/demens furor!*' (line 930) implying her understanding that what she is planning to do is morally wrong and illustrates the inconsistencies in thought and action caused by anger.⁴²⁵

⁴²⁰ For further discussion of Medea and Atreus' insanity, see pp. 211-2.

⁴²¹ Cf. 1.7.1, 1.9.2; Arist. *Eth. Nic.* 1116b23-1117a9; Phld. *Ir.* 31.24-34.6.

⁴²² Writing in reference to the 'disease' of passion and the 'moral-mortal combat', Pratt (1983) notes that: 'This combat is the scene on which the drama is played. All the dramatic events and experiences result from various stages of moral disease and health. Even an initial or temporary passion may be morally fatal, for destructiveness of passion is progressive' (p. 68).

⁴²³ For the association of witchcraft and Hecate in ancient Greece and Rome, see Bailey (2006) p. 31. For the overlap of religious ritual, incantation and witchcraft in *Medea*, see Byville (2011) pp. 4-9; Stratton (2015) pp. 95-6.

⁴²⁴ Cf. 1.1.1, 2.36.4-5, 3.1.5, 3.4.4, 3.27-8.

⁴²⁵ Cf. 1.19.4, 2.26.2ff., 2.27.1-2, 3.35; Gill (2004) pp. 231-2.

Other references to Medea's 'insanity' include the Nurse's reference to Medea's bestial and crazed behaviour (cf. *Med.* '*furiale impetum*' line 157; '*demens*' line 174; '*lymphatus*' line 386; '*vesano gradu*' line 738) as well as her facial expression: '*Face of Fury/uultum Furoris*' line 396). Jason describes Medea in similar terms, with emphasis on the facial expressions that accompany different states of mind (lines 445-6). The Chorus show that anger is uncontrollable (cf. 1.9.3) when they recognise that Medea is unable to control her feelings because her hate is as infinite as her love (lines 866f.). Atreus admits he is struggling to control his feelings which are directed towards revenge ('*vix tempero animo*', *Thy.* line 496), a state which is substantiated by the Chorus' description of a man who is fierce, wild and out of control with anger ('*ferus ille et acer// nec potens mentis truculentus Atreus*', *Thy.* lines 546-7). The Chorus' use of the term '*ferus/beast*' as an adjective confirms that Atreus is inhumane and unhuman in his behaviour and attitude as a result of his anger.

The plays also illustrate how anger is not ultimately satisfying nor does it resolve conflict. Despite claiming a sated appetite previously (*Thy.* line 913), on reflection Atreus later claims he has not done enough (line 1053) and regrets not having drained the boys' blood into Thyestes' mouth (lines 1054-6). He complains that his haste rebuffed his rage (lines 1056-7), showing that *ira* has an even greater capability for malevolence. As a descendant of Tantalus, his great-grandfather, it is not surprising that Atreus can never really be sated. This demonstrates how, in the same way anger is not useful in warfare because it creates rash, disordered thinking rather than a strategic attack necessary for successful assault, even though Jason and Thyestes are harmed as Medea and Atreus had intended, *ira* does not provide a wholly satisfactory result for Atreus, even when the vengeance is carried out (line 1053).⁴²⁶ Both *Medea* and *Thyestes* end inconclusively with no resolution to the conflict between the characters: instead there is a sense of awaiting a response from the victims as reported in the myths. This

⁴²⁶ For anger's ineffectiveness in war, see 1.9.1ff., 1.10.1, 1.11, 1.12.5, 1.13.3, 1.17.1ff., 3.3.1. For a savage man never being satisfied, see the example of Caligula 3.19.5; *Clem.* 1.26.4.

implies that revenge is not the answer to injury and acting from anger does not bring conflict to an adequate conclusion.

Seneca defines anger as a subsidiary of desire, that is, the desire to inflict pain in vengeance for a perceived wrong that has been inflicted. The vileness of this passion is evident from its physical manifestation which makes men aesthetically displeasing. It is comparable with insanity because it is a disturbance to reasoning and provokes uncontrollable, erratic behaviour. If Seneca's plausible arguments are accepted, anger has no use (neither in justice, warfare nor in personal relationships) and it is not noble (because it is a vice and therefore cannot co-exist with virtue). *Ira* is not natural because it is contrary to nature's goal of harmony and causes destruction. Despite its widespread consequences, anger is not powerful: it can be both resisted and extirpated. Passions cannot be moderated as Aristotle assumes and should be extirpated, as Seneca believes, and *constantiae* should be sought, to live a wholesome life.

The similarities of the presentation of anger in Seneca's prose and drama indicate that it is appropriate to read the texts alongside each other when attempting to comprehend the nature of this intolerable passion. Anger in *Medea* and *Thyestes* is caused by disappointment by and injuries from family members and the determination of the protagonists to seek revenge and to reinstate their 'honour' by becoming immortalised for the way in which their vengeance was carried out. This concurs with the definition of anger involving the desire to return a slight (cf. 1.3.3, 1.5.3). The extremes to which Medea and Atreus go to punish Jason and Thyestes respectively confirm how anger is unsuited to punishment as well as demonstrating how the obsession with it is sadistic and destroys the angry person as much as it does its subject. The physical descriptions of the protagonists and the animal metaphors used to communicate them emphasise how passions are unnatural, unsightly aesthetically and far removed from reason's calm countenance.

It is possible to identify instances of perceived inconsistency in the presentation of anger in Seneca's prose and tragedies. For example, in *De Ira* Seneca claims that children and women's anger is sharper than grievous and is trivial (2.19.4). Nothing can be further from the truth for Medea's anger, despite the fact she is female. This may be explained by her adoption of a masculine role and that she is living up to her mythological tradition which is an unconventional presentation of women. Seneca could not present women in their traditional way as in so doing the plot would fail. Elsewhere *De Ira* claims that '*Anger-madness/ira insana*' is the result of attaching high value to minor things (3.34.2). *Medea* and *Thyestes* confirm the close relation between anger and insanity. Yet in Medea's and Atreus' cases, their frustration is based on significant events, involving their relationships with other people, which have overturned their lives and it is questionable whether their anger can be dismissed as being caused by minor or trivial things.

For the non-philosopher in particular, or for those in the early stages of their philosophical journey, personal relationships are the most emotional part of being human and one which provokes the strongest reactions. It comes as little surprise that Medea and Atreus are passionate about their situations, though their reactions are undoubtedly inhumane and unacceptable. This problem can be resolved if a Stoic world-view is taken in which even familial interactions are considered to be indifferents which, by definition, do not truly impact on an individual's well-being or pursuit of virtue. A Stoic would argue that these are comparably trivial in the sense that the passions are generated by indifferents rather than anything else. In this respect, according to Seneca, disagreements with people are 'trivial' in the grand scheme of things and taking this interpretation of his comments aligns the views of his different texts. Across the genres, Seneca demonstrates how *adfectus* have a significant impact on human life, hence their resolution is of foremost importance to Seneca. For this reason, he promotes a variety of techniques for curing anger which will be discussed in Chapter Three.

Chapter Three

Curing anger

Seneca proposes varied methods in his moral essays and *Epistles* to prevent anger from arising. I will address the philosophy-based cures first, bearing in mind the earlier discussion of Seneca's theory of passions before moving on to practical solutions, which while reasonable, do not depend entirely on Stoicism. Some of the techniques Seneca encourages were inherited by Stoics from previous philosophical schools, particularly the Pythagoreans, and Seneca develops them further to meet his needs for ethical instruction. To explain his approach, I will consider early Stoic methods for managing passions and consider how Seneca advances these in order to establish which are practical as opposed to philosophical and which operate on more than one level, as well as critiquing the viability of the methods Seneca proposes as successful remedies. In the fifth chapter, I will return to a discussion of these methods considering whether, if the protagonists in *Medea* and *Thyestes* were real people, they could have benefited from Seneca's advice. In this chapter, I conclude that in general, the subjectivity of anger means that there is no universal method for curing it. However, it is still possible to apply a combination of practical and philosophical techniques of the sort which Seneca proposes for the individual to help him overcome passions so long as he is willing.

Seneca's anger management

Seneca responds to Novatus' inquiry about how to remove, rein in or cure anger (3.3.1) by devoting the third book of his treatise to this subject, continuing his earlier claims that this is one of his intentions in *De Ira*. He identifies two aims: not to fall into anger and not to do wrong when angry. In order to achieve this *ira* should be resisted and restrained (2.18.1). The methods Seneca proposes to cure anger can be divided into changes in attitude and in behaviour. Some are preventative, such as effective education in childhood and avoiding provocation: others are reactive, such as delaying responses. Seneca complements practical advice with philosophical guidance offering a range of 'cures' to address the universal

problem of anger.⁴²⁷ This, together with his recognition that individuals have different requirements, makes his work appealing to non-philosophers.⁴²⁸ The distinction between philosophical and practical solutions for anger management has become blurred over time and many of the techniques Seneca proposes may be used without reference to or belief in Stoic doctrines even though they may have philosophical origins. For example, reactions could be delayed without considering that assent is being withheld. For the purpose of this discussion, the techniques Seneca is offering to his contemporary audience will be placed in a Stoic framework, where appropriate, to capture the philosophical context of their origin, though references will also be made to how these cures could be implemented without a belief in Stoicism or other ancient philosophies. I argue that some techniques which have a philosophical origin could also be applied, both in antiquity and in modern times, by those who are unaware of Stoicism. The attitudes of the patient are an important consideration for the philosophers: even Chrysippus was prepared to assist those who did not share the Stoic sentiments as he recognised that they share the universal problems of passions (cf. Origen, *C. Cel/s.* 1.64, 8.51).

The cures for anger are found in the ability to prevent it from arising or to stop it from developing from its initial stages because, while reason cannot overcome pre-passions they are lessened with awareness and vigilance (2.4.2).⁴²⁹ Sometimes Seneca expects his methods to be applied openly in instances where anger is mild. At other times, it needs to be controlled secretly when anger is becoming increasingly powerful (3.1.1). Depending on the strength of the feeling, it should either be forced into retreat or given into until the first stage has passed to prevent it from becoming carried away because the mind would have relaxed (3.1.1). Successful anger management, according to Seneca, involves a series of ongoing practices;

⁴²⁷ Cf. Nussbaum (1994) esp. pp. 316-402; Hadot (1995, 2003); Sorabji (1997b) and (2000) esp. pp. 159-252.

⁴²⁸ Different cures are required for different passions and a decision must be made regarding whether to direct attention to passions in general or to each separately (cf. *Cic. Tusc.* 4.59). Here, I will focus on methods to cure anger, though acknowledge that in some instances, they are applicable to many other passions too.

⁴²⁹ For pre-passions, see pp. 60-2.

admittedly, this brings challenges and requires effort to achieve. These include education; the spiritual exercises of *praemeditatio malorum*, acting 'fate permitting', *recognitio* and taking the 'view from above'; changing habits, values, behaviour and modifying attitudes towards other people. The more practical approaches, which include not inviting anger, resisting it at its first stages and delaying actions, will all be explained in turn.

Education

Education, both as a child and in adulthood, is an important way of assimilating Stoic doctrines, thereby improving thought processes and behaviours to preclude becoming victims to passions. Lifelong rules are necessary to avoid anger, with different rules applied at different stages of life (2.18.1). Seneca addresses the absence of advice to train children for which Galen and Posidonius criticised Chrysippus (Gal. *PHP* 5.5.2ff.). He believes that the rules applied during the period of education are most profitable because it is easier to train a tender mind than to curb long-standing vices (2.18.2). Anger prevention can begin in childhood, when as non-rational beings, children are not capable of experiencing passions. Guidance at this time requires delicacy because it is difficult to avoid developing anger or blunting children's natural spirit (2.21.1) and things which should be encouraged and those which are checked are fuelled by similar things (2.21.2). A two-pronged approach of curbing and spurring a child is required to guide them through the extremes of self-esteem and high standards versus insolence and temper, all of which can arise from excessive praise (2.21.3). A child should be trained to respond in a particular way in potentially passion-provoking situations. For example, in play fights he should not be allowed to be beaten or to become angry. Instead he must be friendly toward his peers so that he wants to win rather than desiring to hurt his opponent (2.21.5).

Children must not be pampered because a soft upbringing breeds hot-tempered men prone to anger (2.21.6. Cf. 2.25.3). A child should receive nothing if requested in anger and when quiet be offered what he was refused when he cried, to teach him that emotional behaviour does not produce the

desired outcome (2.21.8). Wrong behaviour warrants criticism and as people emulate what is closest to them, it is desirable to have quiet tutors (2.21.9). This is reinforced by an example of a boy who had been brought up with Plato, who, on his return to his parents' house, when he saw his father in a rage, claimed never to have seen such a thing at the philosopher's home (2.21.10). This story can be read as encouraging the reader to emulate the calm environment of Plato's household because of the philosopher's impeccable reputation. The success of early education depends on how receptive the individual is to teaching, both in terms of his personality and the methods of teaching received, whether it is appropriate and reinforced by good parenting.⁴³⁰ This reinforces the importance of the collective role in helping people, particularly children, and how an individual's behaviour may influence their character formation.

After formal education, Stoics expect lifelong learning to develop the mind and improve conduct by training the intellect to perfect reason and to be governed by this principle (cf. *Ep.* 90.46). Precepts help youths who have become more aware of the need for self-control and require guidance to understand how this can be achieved because they reinforce learning and internalisation of lessons.⁴³¹ With age, Seneca advises progression by thinking for oneself and forming opinions as opposed to simply following and memorising great men's words to produce mental independence (*Ep.* 33). The expectation is mature people will engage in conversation with like-minded people (*Ep.* 38.1); follow good examples and keep the company of wise men; emulate the Stoic paradigm of virtue, the Sage; meditate on the Stoic lessons, internalising them, and then appropriately apply them to daily life; learn true definitions; correctly interpret impressions, recognise and dismiss the false and embrace the true, remove passions and channel personal wishes effectively. This self-therapy also comprises spiritual exercises, which are voluntary and subjective, to promote inner

⁴³⁰ Environmental effect is important, though Cleanthes believed that the soul's characteristics were in part hereditary suggesting the roles of both nature and nurture on character formation cf. Diog. Laert. 7.158-9.

⁴³¹ Cf. *Ep.* 94.17, 32, 48, 51.

transformation and ensure the moral freedom of one's soul, allowing the attainment of true wisdom of self and natural order (see below). By adulthood, the advice Seneca offers is largely based in philosophical doctrines, predominantly Stoic but even these have been developed from other traditions.

The comments about rules for adults are confusing because Seneca claims that for older people lot and education no longer constitute a form of corruption or instruction (2.22.1). However, earlier he claimed the opposite was true – anger is associated with the fortune of birth (2.19) and children can be moulded by corrective education (2.21). To reconcile these differences, it could be assumed that Seneca is proposing that the consequences of birth are regulated, and sound education has been acquired to avoid becoming angry to the extent that rational adults have no excuse for not addressing their deficiencies. This can be done by cognitive measures such as assenting correctly to impressions (2.22.2), checking feelings prior to responding to anger-provoking scenarios (2.22-7), as well as following the laws and precepts described above. Fault should not be found in others (2.28); any feelings of unfair treatment may be because it was unexpected but in all instances, retribution is unacceptable, and forgiveness is preferable (2.31). The educative measures are preventative in that through growth, combined with learning to become aware of personal feelings, the development into passions can be prevented. Moral education is necessary from a Stoic perspective throughout a person's life because teaching removes false opinions, substituting correct doctrines about life and happiness, the most significant being freedom from passions.

Spiritual exercises

Taking a philosophical approach to anger is a constructive preventative measure to protect passions: by comprehending and internalising principles about the psychology of action and causes of passions, individuals will be in a stronger position to identify signs of these feelings, leading to a

rebalance of thinking.⁴³² Consequently, Seneca insists on the need for men to pay more attention to improve their perceptions so that the real importance of things can be grasped. This includes people understanding their true place in the cosmos so that they can identify what is virtuous and act accordingly (1.31.4).⁴³³ Seneca encourages spiritual exercises, which is an active discipline that considers the relationship between thoughts, especially value judgements and feelings, in particular anger and distress. This involves the vigilant attention for habit formation and desensitisation from challenging situations, requiring recognition and non-judgmental acceptance of thoughts and feelings. These techniques increase self-awareness and grant a greater understanding of how the mind operates and what riles it, leading to a greater comprehension of the world and the strength of the 'disease' before it spreads (3.10.4).⁴³⁴

The spiritual exercises involve observing physical reactions to cognitions and character, which increases awareness of intentions and in so-doing facilitates virtuous living, even though as an exercise they are not virtue itself. Seneca advises reflection is carried out daily '*cotidiana meditatio*' for the greatest chance of self-improvement as learning comes through practice (*Ep.* 16.1).⁴³⁵ Stoics recommend specific practices to be carried out at the start and close of the day – '*preparation for adversity/praemeditatio malorum*' and '*self-reflection/recognitio*' – which are self-training therapies where time alone is used to develop self-knowledge and how to manage responses so that reactions are appropriate in all situations. Taking the 'view from above' helps people to consider different perceptions by realising

⁴³² Cf. Gal. *PHP* 4.7.21-2, 5.6.1-6, 14, 23-6.

⁴³³ Wildberger (2006) identifies the key terms Seneca uses to convey this repeated idea: '*attendere*' (*Ep.* 1.1; 20.1-3; 22.10; 24.2, 12-4; 50.3-4; 59.14; 76.27-9; 83.1-2; 98.4); '*observare...senties*' (*Ep.* 99.7); '*respice... cogita... observa*' (*Ep.* 99.10); '*propone... complectere... compara... videbis*' (*Ep.* 99.13); '*aspice... manifestum erit*' (*Ep.* 110.3-12); '*oculos intendere... iam apparebit*' (*Ep.* 110.11) and '*ut tecum ipse dispicias*' (*Ep.* 114.2-7; 119.8) (p. 87 n. 29).

⁴³⁴ Cf. Nussbaum (1994) who accurately summarises that: 'The Stoic idea of learning is an idea of increasing vigilance and wakefulness, as the mind, increasingly rapid and alive, learns to repossess its own experiences from the fog of habit, convention, and forgetfulness' (p. 340). Cf. Williams (2015) p. 136.

⁴³⁵ Cf. *Ep.* 50.1; 71.31; 107.3. Cf. Newman (1989).

their relative place in the cosmos and to place the causes of anger into perspective so that the passion either does not arise or does not grow.

Preparation for adversity/*praemeditatio malorum* or dwelling in advance/*proendemein*

Cicero promoted a technique of considering future events (*praemeditatio futuri mali*) to prevent passions from arising, which he ascribed to the Cyrenaics who believed that distress does not arise from every misfortune, only those which are unexpected (Cic. *Tusc.* 3.28-31). When things happen suddenly they can be perceived as being more serious because there has been no time to reflect and guilt may be felt if something could have been done in advance to prevent the circumstances from arising (Cic. *Tusc.* 3.52). To address this problem, Cyrenaics proposed the continuous pre-rehearsal of future evils because ‘*foresight and mental preparation can do a great deal to lessen the pain —quoniam multum potest provisio animi et praeparatio ad minuendum dolorem*’ (Cic. *Tusc.* 3.30). Indeed, self-examination, comprehending human life, being unsurprised by occurrences and not assuming that something will not happen because it has not before is ‘*praestans et divina sapientia*’, the most noble and god-like form of wisdom (Cic. *Tusc.* 3.30).

Stoicism developed the Cyrenaics’ approach of anticipating future evil by making it a more active process, encouraging education about that which is beyond man’s sphere of control and rehearsing for the event.⁴³⁶ Cicero reported that Chrysippus believed people are struck by greater force by that which is unforeseen (Cic. *Tusc.* 3.52) which indicates that early Stoics adopted this tradition of preparing for their future. Likewise, Posidonius argued that people who are unused to something are more greatly affected in situations of fear, distress, desire or pleasure but ‘*what is given an*

⁴³⁶ Cf. Newman (1989) p. 1478. Newman argues that the purpose of *meditatio* for Stoics is to remove false opinions and reinforce virtue as the goal, as opposed to considering approaching evils (p. 1478). It is true that virtue is the focus but preparing mankind for how to deal with adversity and apply virtue in such circumstances remains an important purpose of the exercise. I share Newman’s belief that *meditatio* was used to ‘correct a sick soul with false judgement’ as the ultimate purpose of these spiritual exercises is to realign thinking so that it accords with reason (p. 1482). Cf. Veyne (2003) pp. 75-7; Setaioli (2014b) pp. 246-51.

opposite evaluation is seized only when its habituation is changed in the course of time' (Gal. *PHP* 4.5.34-5). Posidonius later argued that something which is unprepared for, or something strange which arises suddenly, causes confusion and changes in judgements; however, if it is prepared for and made familiar, the event will either not affect movements or, if it does, this will be to a limited extent (Gal. *PHP* 4.7.7).

Avoiding the unexpected is possible, according to Posidonius, by considering (potential) future events in a particular way. He advised people to '*dwell in advance/proendēmein*' by which he meant that individuals should create an 'image' about what may happen, '*to behave toward things not yet present as though they were present*' and habituate themselves to them as if they had already occurred (Gal. *PHP* 4.7.7-8).⁴³⁷ This practical process of visualisation and habituation is a variation on Chrysippus' belief that people should change their beliefs but produces the same result.⁴³⁸ Galen reported Posidonius citing examples of the success of those who have done this, for example Anaxagoras' coping with the loss of his son and Euripides' Theseus (Gal. *PHP* 4.7.9-11), examples which are also found in Cicero who mentioned Telamon's acceptance of his son's mortality and quotes Ennius' Theseus "*I pondered in my heart the miseries to come*" — "*Futuras mecum commentabar miserias*" (Cic. *Tusc.* 3.58. Cf. Cic. *Tusc.* 3.28).

Seneca continues the tradition of recommending preparation and explains how a Stoic begins his day imagining potential scenarios and what is troubling him and what bad things may happen in the future by considering the sort of people we may encounter, such as drunks, lustful, ungrateful, greedy and overly ambitious men (2.10.7. Cf. 2.31.2, 3.36).⁴³⁹ When the Sage encounters such men, he will see them as objectively as a physician views the sick and acts as a reformer for sinners (2.10.7). He knows that other people and their behaviours do not truly affect his well-being because

⁴³⁷ Cf. Gill (1998) pp. 129-30.

⁴³⁸ Cf. Graver (2002) p. 219.

⁴³⁹ Cf. *Ep.* 16.1.

humans have no control over them.⁴⁴⁰ Seneca resorts to military metaphors to explain how being prepared like a soldier anticipating attack offers protection like that of a city from an enemy (*Helv.* 5.3). This metaphor is a reminder of the challenges which may be faced and the need for strategic attack to conquer personal problems, particularly anger. If events and other people's vicious actions are interpreted as 'indifferent' like the weather, any ill-feeling would not cause any harm even when it appears to thwart one's goals. By adopting this view, people can gain a greater sense of control, realising that humans are a cause of a chain of events not a victim of them which improves resilience and efficiency. Consequently, there is no need to depend on or fear fate and as a result of this exercise, any eventuality will be prepared for (*Ep.* 91.4). It is possible to choose to be objective and calm, or at the very least attempt to use difficult situations to practise virtue by the way the problem is tackled or avoided. A Stoic also considers what he hopes to achieve, in line with his philosophical principles and how by the end of the day, he can be a step closer to *tranquillitas* and becoming the virtuous person he wants to be. *Praemeditatio malorum* serves as a reminder that individuals are an important part of a whole, linked by cosmic order, and behaviour throughout the day should reflect this relationship. The purpose of such preparation is so that the world can be accepted and embraced as it is, despite the problems it may present, in the knowledge that the outcome is indifferent because it does not affect virtue.

The planning which accompanies *praemeditatio malorum* aims to avoid surprises which are stimuli to irrational behaviour, as well as considering how the unexpected may be dealt with in a rational way. This provokes a response to any eventuality, to alleviate anxieties and avoid passions, as well as increasing awareness of alternative stances that may be a more accurate assessment of the situation, in addition to highlighting potential danger points throughout the day. Holding these beliefs improves a person's resilience, making him mentally stronger and more rational in his thinking: '*The mind faces bravely the things it's prepared to encounter — Fortis est*

⁴⁴⁰ For man's sphere of control, see p. 64.

animus ad quae praeparatus uenit (3.37.3). Seneca's other works reinforce what he argues in *De Ira*. For instance, he believes that difficulties are an opportunity for personal growth and to gain strength from knowing what is within man's power to change. Seneca argues that: '*disaster is virtue's opportunity/calamitas virtutis occasio est*' (*Prov.* 4.6) because it offers an occasion to display virtues, such as courage and wisdom and to avoid succumbing to passions such as anger (*Prov.* 3.3). Life's challenges should be used as training exercises, like those of a champion wrestler (*Prov.* 2.3). They provide an occasion to demonstrate inner strength and realise that difficulties are necessary to reinforce this, in the same way as fighting colds is necessary to build the immune system.

Anxiety and the fear of the future remain a major obstacle to *tranquillitas* so this problem needs to be tackled urgently.⁴⁴¹ *Praemeditatio malorum* reveals the impermanence of life and is humbling in that it forces the realisation that no one is immune from misfortune and facing difficulties is part of what it is to be human, for example, by imagining responses to loss of something or someone which is valued and remembering that everything is on loan from God and fortune (cf. *Ep.* 87.7).⁴⁴² After all, adversity is only so when it is thought to be and the individual is as wretched as he believes himself to be (*Ep.* 78.13). By interpreting impressions differently and from questioning the basis on which they are found to be negative, concerns will be put into perspective. The situation can be viewed from a distant, non-egotistical stance, aware that negative outcomes are only a possible outcome of the challenge and solutions can be considered in advance of needing them.

Rehearsing the future enables people to accept events that would have previously disturbed them and to realise that while bad things could happen, they are not inherently bad but are as nature ordained, which emphasises the importance of believing in a providential world order.⁴⁴³ This resignation

⁴⁴¹ Cf. *Ep.* 13.4ff.; 26.7; 78.14; 98.6ff.; 108.8.

⁴⁴² Cf. *Beat.* 21.2; *Ep.* 120.19; *Marc.* 10.3; Epict. *Ench.* 11.

⁴⁴³ For Stoic theology, see pp. 97-9.

involves acceptance of the unchangeable (for example, something which happened in the past) and a wish to achieve certain things in the future if circumstances allow it. Cleanthes declared ‘*Lead me Zeus and Destiny, wherever you have ordained for me*’ and he would follow willingly (Stob. *Ecl.* 1.1.12 (SVF 1.537)⁴⁴⁴ and, according to Epictetus, Chrysippus argued that ‘*if I really knew that it was ordained for me to be ill at this present moment, I would even seek illness*’ (Epict. *Dissert.* 2.6.9-10 (SVF3.191)).⁴⁴⁵ In a similar vein, Seneca emphasises the importance of perfecting the ability to endure adversity with a ‘*glad mind/ laeto animo*’ as if it were something that had been willed because all situations accord with God’s will because ‘*Crying, complaining and moaning are rebellion — flere, queri et gemere desciscere est*’ (QNat. 3. Pr. 12).⁴⁴⁶

Learning how to behave correctly in every situation takes practice and failures are inevitable. Nonetheless, it remains an individual’s duty to act virtuously when undertaking the tasks because it is in this that true worth lies and actions should be undertaken without attachment to the outcome (*Beat.* 20.2). Seneca argues that progress can be measured by the commitment to self-improvement and the desire to progress (*Ep.* 71.35-6). Thus, mistakes should be a motivation rather than a deterrent (*Prov.* 5.9), because they teach humility in relation to human limitations and make people more tolerant of themselves and of other people. Awareness of obstacles and knowledge of personal weaknesses, even when shaken by very serious and sudden happenings, ensures anger will not develop and creates an understanding that it is possible to hide such feelings and not acknowledge hurt (3.13.6).

For its success, *praemeditatio malorum* must be carried out for a fixed period of time, focusing on specific and plausible obstacles to achieve goals, including perfect reason and *tranquillitas*, rather than heightened anxiety

⁴⁴⁴ Translated by LS (1987) 62B p. 386. Cf. *Ep.* 107.10-1.

⁴⁴⁵ Translated by Oldfather (1925) p. 243.

⁴⁴⁶ Hence, the Sage remains ‘happy’ even while being tortured on the rack cf. *Ep.* 66.18ff.; Cic. *Tusc.* 5.73; Diog. Laert. 10.118.

about problems which are unlikely to arise. The purpose of the technique is not to scare but to reveal the origins of personal anxiety, to train people to be calm and to defuse irrational beliefs and fears before they are encountered in stressful situations which might allow irrationality to take control.

A Stoic perspective could be accused of being pessimistic for encouraging the belief that the worst will happen and in this way, Stoics could be perceived as promoting negative thinking. For instance, Epicureans are reported to attack *praemeditatio malorum* for making men sad (Cic. *Tusc.* 3.34). This criticism of the *praemeditatio* is mistaken because, from a Stoic perspective, everyone has the potential to acquire virtue because of man's innate capacity of reason. *Praemeditatio malorum* is not designed to train people to expect the worst, but to make them become more rational and accepting, to abandon the passions of hope and fear because they involve external factors which are beyond man's control and to offer an opportunity to spot irrationality before it has a chance to affect his daily life. Instead, Stoics invite consideration of worst-case scenarios to rehearse responses, without being emotionally attached to the outcome and without assuming that the event will arise in the same way it is envisaged. Realising that it is tolerable to have little control over the future brings people closer to becoming a Sage who is unconcerned about the future. It is reassuring to remember these conclusions throughout the day.

This practice is also beneficial not only in that preparing for any eventuality lessens suffering but also because it assists in understanding what it is to be human, that endurance is part of mortality and that the only true evil is personal wrongdoing (cf. Cic. *Tusc.* 3.34, 3.60, 4.64). A related way of managing complex feelings is through the contemplation of human mortality which Seneca encourages.⁴⁴⁷ This aims to alleviate fear of death and to teach the true value of objects to avoid obsessions with externals or being angered when they are taken away (cf. 2.28.4; 3.42.2-3.43.1).⁴⁴⁸ Seneca

⁴⁴⁷ Cf. Olberding (2008) p. 130; Ker (2009a) pp. 77-85, 92-6.

⁴⁴⁸ Cf. *Beat.* 3.3; *Ep.* 30.18; 63; 69.6; 70.18; 77.18ff.; 114.27; *Helv.*; *Marc.*

advises that loved ones are appreciated, accepting that people, like 'things', are only temporarily present. Family members should be kissed at night, remembering that it may be for the last time (*Ep.* 63.15) and men should '*greedily enjoy our friends/amicis avide fruamur*' for the same reasons (*Ep.* 63.8). The prospect of loss should not cause sadness because it is preferable to have experienced other people's company, even for a short time, than not at all (*Marc.* 12.3).⁴⁴⁹ Taking this view would prevent grief and its associated anger from taking hold.

Personal circumstances should be appreciated with neither desire nor hope for anything, as these are beyond human control; people should have realistic expectations of the future and live one day at a time because the past cannot be changed, the future can only be prepared for and death may occur at any time (cf. *Ep.* 101.10). This view is a particularly helpful way of controlling anger because it puts the situation into perspective (3.42.2). To emphasise his point, through a series of rhetorical questions, Seneca questions why people act as though they will live forever, why lives are wasted with anger and inflicting pain on others as this detracts from pursuing reason. Instead, Seneca advises spiritual exercises and becoming dedicated to virtuous actions, when, as mortals, fate allows no time to waste because of human mortality (3.42.1).⁴⁵⁰ It is better to live a short human life in peace with oneself and others, to be loved while alive and missed after death (3.43.1); to be grateful for the present situation, as to be otherwise will cause unnecessary strife (3.30.3); to be patient for the future, remembering there are many people less fortunate (3.31.1ff.); not to become angered by trifling matters, such as others being promoted (3.37.4) and to realise that death is a leveller (3.43.1. Cf. 2.28.4).⁴⁵¹ Preparing for death alleviates the fear of it and thus enables the adoption of rational

⁴⁴⁹ Ker (2009a) pp. 92-6.

⁴⁵⁰ The length of his life is of no significance to the Sage (cf. *Brev.* 1; *Ep.* 1.2; 70.5; 73.13; 77.20; 85.22ff.; 93.2) because virtue does not depend on the length of a man's life (*Ep.* 78.27; 93.4-7). What is important is living the best life in the present and to accept divine order and use time alive wisely (*Brev.* 1-2). Consequently, man should offer himself to fate without resistance (*Prov.* 5.8).

⁴⁵¹ Indeed, '*it is a wonderful thing to learn thoroughly how to die — egregia res est mortem condiscere*' (*Ep.* 26.9. Cf. *Tranq.* 3.4) and being prepared is vital because death can arise at any time (*Ep.* 26.7).

responses to the unexpected thereby preventing anger from arising (cf. *Ep.* 4.4-5).⁴⁵²

The ‘reserve clause/exceptio’ or ‘fate permitting/deo volente’

An extension of the mental rehearsal involves planning with a certain reservation, by the ‘reserve clause/exceptio’. That is, being prepared for the fact that things can change unexpectedly, and men should act ‘fate permitting’ (*Ben.* 4.34.4).⁴⁵³ This means agreeing to act in a certain way, correctly and virtuously, aiming to succeed, unless prevented by circumstances. This Stoic view is not implying superstition from the references to fate. It is part of a theory of physics (or natural philosophy) referring to the sequence of causation which exists in the universe (cf. *Cic. Div.* 1.125-6). Thus acting with ‘reservation’ involves the knowledge that the outcome is beyond control (cf. *Tranq.* 13.2-3) since the sphere of control is restricted to mental activities and actions. A Stoic would accept Providential order as a perfect design because ‘Heaven decreed better/di melius’ (*Ep.* 98.5).⁴⁵⁴ If the order of events is viewed in this way, there would be no cause for anger in cases where the outcome is not as anticipated, because any eventuality would be regarded as being in accordance with nature and thus should be accepted.

Although success is preferable, the possibility of plans not transpiring as had been intended should be expected and these should be met with changes in approach according to personal abilities and with learning from mistakes. A Stoic approach offers reassurance that striving for a goal is more important than achieving it. As long as actions are carried out correctly (i.e. virtuously, under the command of reason without interference from passions), success follows because it is intentions and conduct which really matter (cf. *Ep.* 82.18).⁴⁵⁵ In this way, the reserve clause helps people to accept that they can continue living well whether or not they ‘succeed’ externally and that any perceived failure should not provoke anger at

⁴⁵² Cf. *Ep.* 24.24; 30.18; 70.17; *QNat.* 2.59.3; *Tranq.* 3.4.

⁴⁵³ Cf. Griffin (2013) p. 255.

⁴⁵⁴ Cf. *Cic. Nat. D.* 2.73-153.

⁴⁵⁵ Cf. Inwood (1986).

oneself or others. Stoicism is not about perfection *per se* but about the journey of progression (cf. *Ep.* 94.7; Diog. Laert. 7.128) with the goal of decreasing vices without the expectation of ever becoming a Sage (*Beat.* 17.3).⁴⁵⁶ Cleanthes believed that individuals should be praised for their virtuous intentions and efforts, whether or not they actually achieve their goals (*Ben.* 6.10.2-11.2).⁴⁵⁷ This is regularly communicated through the use of a craft analogy to illustrate the best means by which to live, such as archery, farming, javelin throwing and playing instruments (cf. *Ep.* 71.3; 94.3).⁴⁵⁸ Other craftsmen are guided by precepts too, suggesting the universal importance of precepts and the following of rules in order to be successful at an activity. This reference involves two levels: at the lowest level, it involves knowledge of what to do in general by following rules without knowing why. With greater expertise and experience and the use of reason to internalise the principles, comes the knowledge about why certain actions are required to complete the skill. Even with this knowledge, goals may still not be achieved: for example, an archer may miss a target despite his satisfactory knowledge of the craft because of external factors beyond his control. Meeting failure in this way is less upsetting when there is no regret for things beyond personal control and removes the use of excuses after the event for failing. The reserve clause does not encourage demotivation: it serves as a reminder of the limits of what is within man's control and that which is within his power must be used wisely, virtuously and to the best possible end: to do this the issue of anger should be addressed and focus placed on its removal.

Self-reflection/*recognitio*

After preparation for the day's events, in the evening conduct throughout the day needs to be reflected upon. Self-awareness is an important part of practising Stoicism. Nocturnal self-examination and self-interrogation were standard spiritual practice in the ancient world (cf. Hor. *Sat.* 1.4.133-8), originating with the Pythagoreans and continuing the Greek motto 'Know

⁴⁵⁶ For the journey of the *proficiens*, see p. 20. For the rarity of the Sage, see p. 16.

⁴⁵⁷ Cf. Cic. *Parad. Stoic.* 3.20.

⁴⁵⁸ Cf. Cic. *Fin.* 3.22ff., 3.32; Stob. *Ecl.* 2.5ff.

Thyself, captured by Socrates' maxim '*an unexamined life is not worth living for men*' (Pl. *Ap.* 38A5-6).⁴⁵⁹ In the *Golden Verses*, the Pythagoreans advised methodically reliving each thought, feeling and event of the day, critiquing behaviour and addressing areas for improvement by asking: "*Where have I transgressed? What have I accomplished? What duty have I neglected?*", holding that worthless acts should be reprimanded, and good acts should be praised by being '*glad*' (Pythag. *Carm. aur.* 40-4).⁴⁶⁰ The aim is to '*Work hard at this, meditate on this*' and '*passionately desire this*' as this is following '*divine virtue*' and worshipping the gods (Pythag. *Carm. aur.* 45). This practice is a way of understanding the '*essence*' of the gods and men which provides protection from the unexpected (Pythag. *Carm. aur.* 49ff.). According to Cicero, Cato admitted that he followed the '*practice of the Pythagoreans/Pythagoreorumque more*' each night by analysing what he had said, heard, or done during the day and that this practice was '*intellectual gymnastics/exercitationes ingenii*' in order to exercise his memory (Cic. *Sen.* 38).⁴⁶¹ The practice was adopted by Roman philosophical schools, such as the Sextii for moral self-examination: Sextius is reported to have reflected on his day by asking himself a series of short questions. He asked which of his ills he had healed, noted the vices he had resisted and how he was '*better/melior*' in the sense of making improvements in his character and sickness of mind (3.36.1).

Seneca adopts this practice himself but extends Sextius' practice by not only asking questions but also using self-directed commands to prevent and control passions such as not acting in anger (3.36-7), offering alternative responses such as laughter (3.36.4) and preparing himself for future obstacles ('*Fortis est animus ad quae praeparatus uenit*').⁴⁶² When it is dark and his wife, Paulina, is silent (aware of her husband's task), he retraces all his actions and words during that day, concealing and omitting nothing, as he sees no need to recoil from his mistakes: '*every day I plead my case*

⁴⁵⁹ Cf. Iambli. *VP* 165; Porph. *VP* 40; Ker (2009b) pp. 169-70.

⁴⁶⁰ Translated by Thom (1995) p. 97.

⁴⁶¹ Translated by Falconer (1964) p. 47.

⁴⁶² Cf. Ker (2009b) pp. 160-87; Star (2012) p. 48; Wilson (2014) pp. 105-8.

before myself — cotidie apud me causam dico (3.36.3).⁴⁶³ His use of juridical metaphors reflects the importance of correct judgement to prevent passions and the need to be accountable for what is within man's control, i.e. thoughts and actions, in line with Stoic expectations of right human conduct. Seneca is honest with himself, with sufficient self-awareness to identify his strengths and weaknesses and how he needs to improve himself. He admits his mistakes, such as speaking too offensively in a dispute or criticising someone too bluntly, thus causing offence instead of improving the man (3.36.4). He forgives himself, on the understanding that he will not repeat the mistake (3.36.3). In future, he will consider whether that person can accept the truth about himself, knowing that a good man accepts reproof gladly but the worse a man is, the more bitterly he resents it (3.36.4). Hasty anger can be avoided by considering the occasions when undeserved suspicion is experienced or when good acts were misconstrued to be injury by realising that hate should be replaced with love, by being reminded that all have been guilty of the same offence in the past and by concluding therefore that it is not an appropriate reaction (2.28.6) to be quick to notice the vices of others but not of oneself (2.28.8).

Even though this practice is not primarily intended to aid relaxation, lessening of physical and mental tension is a positive result of becoming aware of personal thoughts. For example, Seneca reassures his readers that nothing is more perfectly suited to self-improvement, and deep, untroubled sleep follows praise or admonishment of the soul (3.36.2). The implication is that Seneca intends this nightly experience of *tranquillitas* to continue into the next day. By detailing his experience, Seneca shows how his advice is implemented and the benefits which arise from doing this, making it more appealing to emulate. It is reasonable to assume that

⁴⁶³ While there is no reference in *De Ira* to Paulina performing *recognitio*, her respectful support is indicative of the partnership of spouses in pursuing virtue cf. Gloyn (2017) p. 101. Seneca is interpreted to see husband and wife as being equal in marriage as they provide the opportunity for perfect virtue: 'the ideal marriage as a state of stability that reciprocally leads to virtue' (Gloyn (2017) p. 79). Cf. Sen. *De Matrimonio*; Ker (2009b) p. 171. From a personal stance, Seneca explains the concern for the physical and mental wellbeing of spouses because they are connected '*ut illi consulam, mihi consulere*' (*Ep.* 104.2, 5). Thus, Seneca's self-improvement is as much for his wife's benefit as his own: a lesson which should be absorbed by his readers to ensure responsibility for their actions.

Seneca deliberately used self-apostrophe to communicate his *meditatio* in order to persuade his contemporaries of the value of the technique because they would be familiar with such language from their exposure to declamation and other genres.⁴⁶⁴ In this way, Seneca demonstrates his ability to write convincingly from a philosophical perspective at the same time as producing ideas and practices which are applicable to the non-philosopher.

By illustrating his arguments with a living example, Seneca demonstrates that self-scrutiny is an important part of personal development and advises his readers to carry out this practice too so that they become aware of their strengths and limitations, fulfil their natural potential and live in accordance with their true nature (cf. *Brev.* 2.5; *Ep.* 16.2; 28.10; 65.15; 83.2; 118.2; *Tranq.* 6.2). He summarises Epicurus (fr. 522 Usener *Epicurea*) to confirm the need to analyse behaviour, to desire correction and facilitate reformation (*Ep.* 28.10). Being aware of mistakes facilitates learning and consequent improvement of moral character and in choices. *Recognitio* is necessary because no one is free from fault (2.28.1) and no one can claim to be innocent of every law (2.28.2). With self-awareness comes the necessary understanding of personal irritations so that they can be dismissed rather than reacted to: '*We become more self-controlled when we take a look at ourselves — Faciet nos moderatiores respectus nostri*' (2.28.8). Part of *recognitio* involves humility (recognising, sometimes addressing and at other times accepting, personal faults and weaknesses) as well as showing appropriate concern for other people through *humanitas*.⁴⁶⁵ It is important to consider if the questioner has erred in the same way as others, as this is a means of increasing tolerance (2.28.8). Exposing personal vices for examination is particularly important for *ira*. This is because the likelihood of becoming angry will be reduced through regular reminders of its faults by charging and convicting it: uncovering its evils means it can be seen for what it is and compared with all that is bad (3.5.3). Anger will cease and be more

⁴⁶⁴ Cf. Star (2012).

⁴⁶⁵ For *humanitas*, see pp. 90, 117-8, 160, 170-3.

controllable, leading to greater accountability, when it is known that conduct will be analysed (3.36.2).

Seneca develops his predecessors' practices by incorporating an additional element into *recognitio*. He advocates that it also involves imagining the conduct of wise men and comparing personal conduct with this ideal, to the extent of holding imaginary conversations with great men such as Cato, Laelius or Scipio (cf. *Ep.* 6.6-7; 11.8-10). Through this there is an aspirational example and a set of principles by which to live. *Recognitio* can be carried out in solitude, when thinking, or by writing a journal or poem to express what the philosophical principles mean to the individual and how they affect his life so that he can measure his improvement writing (Hor. *Sat.* 1.4.138-9). A critic of *recognitio* may argue that it is possible to become so disengaged that no personal value is attached to the opinions of other people, even to the extent of overlooking compliments. However, for Stoics, the way in which other people consider another man's actions is of no concern because their praise is an indifferent. It is only important whether the individual finds his actions to be the sort he considers genuinely praiseworthy according to reason and by the standards of a Sage.⁴⁶⁶

It is possible to display virtue by responding in a just manner to other people's anger. If the anger of other people is seen to be born from the ignorance of the truth and such men are dealt with patiently, they can be responded to more positively. Compassion should be directed towards those who are rarely angry and those in whom anger is commonplace should either be avoided or ignored. This is because vices can spread in the undisciplined person and anger tries to command attention. Anger is manipulative, but it does not need to influence people in the way it intends. Appropriate responses to anger lead to respect from other people not

⁴⁶⁶ Cicero captured this important consideration when he discussed the distinction between popular acclaim and 'real glory' (Cic. *Fin.* 2.48-9. Cf. Cic. *Off.* 1.65; Cic. *Tusc.* 1.109-10, 2.63-4, 3.3-4). He reflected a Stoic sentiment that 'real glory' should be the only concern and that this takes the form of '*unanimous praise of good persons — consentiens laus bonorum*' who can judge excellence of character (Cic. *Tusc.* 3.3). These comments reinforce Stoic notions about externals being indifferent and the importance of cultivating characters to perfect excellence rather than depending on other people's opinions.

mockery, as Seneca demonstrates when he argues that a king does not receive glory from savage punishment but from restraint, saving victims from angry men and concealing his own anger (*Clem.* 1.17.3). It is not the individual's responsibility to control other people, because ultimately as externals they are indifferent to his genuine well-being. From a Stoic perspective, as citizens of the universe, human beings have a social and moral responsibility to be part of the community according to nature which should provide other people with such positive *exempla* of behaviour and attitude that guide and indirectly influence the people who err, for instance by challenging the angry person with kindness (2.34.5). At Seneca's death, he is reported to have said that the '*image of his life/imaginem vitae suae*' was the most valuable possession he could offer to his friends, marking the importance of providing a good example for other people (Tac. *Ann.* 15.62).⁴⁶⁷

Clementia is also expedient for self-improvement in that it produces more wholesome individuals who can hold themselves accountable to God fearlessly (*Clem.* 1.1.4). *De Clementia* also encourages the introspection and increased self-knowledge which is heavily promoted in *De Ira* in order to manage responses and avoid becoming impassioned. Seneca claims to be acting as a mirror to Nero so that he may see himself as he is and the person he could become – someone who will attain the highest pleasure according to the Stoic vision of virtue (*ibid* 1.1.1). He advises Nero that great satisfaction comes from behaving well as God ordains and the greatest reward derives from excellence but also that there is pleasure, in the sense of an intrinsic and lasting contentment, from examining a '*good conscience/bonam conscientiam*' (*ibid* 1.1.1).

Reflection should be carried out constructively and not for self-attack but for a set period of time, to avoid it from becoming procrastination. It should be a positive experience of celebrating the day and making the most of opportunities for improvement in the future. This exercise increases self-

⁴⁶⁷ Cf. Griffin (1974, repr. 2008); Ker (2009a) pp. 281ff.

awareness, in particular questioning why specific thought processes and responses have occurred, providing the opportunity to act and think differently. Greater awareness of thought processes better equips the individual to cope with unexpected feelings because he has control over the way in which he thinks, is able to identify pre-passions to prevent them from developing into anger and make better choices which are based on reason, not irrational passions. The knowledge that comes from self-awareness can be translated into correct behaviour i.e. to be motivated to take a certain course of action, in accordance with nature, based in reason and have the will to change so that the goal of replacing anger with *tranquillitas* is actively pursued.

The ‘view from above’

As part of increased self-awareness, Seneca recommends taking the ‘view from above’ in which the current situation is imagined from an aerial view.⁴⁶⁸ Cicero described this approach in his dream to Scipio who is advised to consider the heavens as opposed to earthly considerations to understand the rewards of heaven and freedom in death (cf. Cic. *Rep.* 6.17.1-2, 20.1-3). Seneca’s stance is to improve a man’s experience when he is alive, freeing him from the trappings of earth and assisting self-improvement.⁴⁶⁹ He invites focus on noble and lofty things as opposed to pleasure as this results in enlightenment with nature’s secrets disclosed and the accompanying clarity of mind. Stars and the sky are particularly appropriate subjects for reflection and consolation because they are consistent in that they can be viewed wherever an individual is located on earth, constantly enabling him to commune with God (*Helv.* 8.6). Consequently, Seneca encourages his readers to ‘*picture to yourself/imaginare tecum*’ shining stars in a clear sky with evenly shining heaven. By focusing on the wider world and that which is greater than the individual, previous errors and darkness can be disclosed compared to the newly found perfect light (*Ep.* 102.28). Studies of nature reveal knowledge about non-earthly phenomena which are enlightening by removing the ‘fog’ from man’s eyes (*caliginem*,

⁴⁶⁸ Cf. Wilson (2014) pp. 178-80.

⁴⁶⁹ Cf. Williams (2012) p. 29; Gunderson (2015) pp. 68-9.

tenebris) (*QNat.* 1 Praef. 2). Expanding the perception of the world to contemplate the nature of God, his powers of creation and relation to fate provides similar comfort (*QNat.* 1 Praef. 3).⁴⁷⁰ The habit of looking upwards, literally and metaphorically, was commonly practised by philosophers and was one through which they appreciated their true nature and that of the universe, making them better citizens of the universe as a result (cf. *Philo Leg.* 2.44-8, 3.1-6).⁴⁷¹

The subsequent distance provides an opportunity for the contemplation of comparative place in the cosmic order. The time can be used to reflect upon nature's great variations and the totality of time, then return to the present. This technique enables things to be seen from many perspectives, prompting changes in values and reduced attachment to challenges, knowing that people before and since have faced and will continue to face and overcome similar situations which will help with the recognition that a given situation is not necessarily as bad as was initially perceived (cf. *Cic. Tusc.* 4.79).⁴⁷² It is also a helpful technique to cope with bereavement; by considering man's existence within the universe's infinity, there is no reason to pray for or desire a long life (*Ep.* 99.10). This exercise identifies the triviality of many things, to the extent that the world is a '*pinprick/punctum*' in the universe making lavish displays of wealth and warfare futile (cf. *QNat.* 1 Praef. 7-11).⁴⁷³ Applying this knowledge will minimise the risk of being angry at the petty things which Seneca refers to as causes of anger (3.34.2-3. Cf. 2.25-6).

The exercise is helpful in dealing with anger because it puts feelings into a wider context, forcing recognition that current feelings are minute in the grand scheme of things, that there are alternative views about the same issue and that humans are a part of a greater whole (2.28.4). Taking this view eliminates passions enabling greater focus on what can be controlled,

⁴⁷⁰ Cf. *Ep.* 49.2-3; *Cic. Nat. D.* 2.4-5, 153.

⁴⁷¹ Cf. Hadot (1995, 2003) pp. 242-8.

⁴⁷² Williams (2012) refers to the reassurance of 'solace' through the recognition of an individual's place in 'the providence of cosmic reason' (p. 48).

⁴⁷³ Cf. Hine (2006) pp. 45-6.

thus assisting in the acquisition of virtue and achieving *tranquillitas*. This awareness brings social benefits: a greater understanding of place within the universe leads to improved inter-personal relations and increased tolerance and compassion.⁴⁷⁴ This exercise complements the reserve clause and awareness of the sphere of control, aiding the realisation that individual achievements and failures are insignificant. However, because all people are part of a whole and all actions have cosmic consequences, so roles must be performed as prescribed and actions must be correct. It could be argued against Stoicism that taking the 'view from above' could lead to nihilism and the belief that because an individual is not as important as he had previously assumed, he could become depressed and/or reckless with total disregard for the consequences of his behaviour. A defence for Stoicism is that viewing the universe as a whole and remembering mankind's comparatively small part in it, actually reinforces the duty to care for other people. Stoics would acknowledge that this practice is to be limited – there needs to be a balance between living existentially and being self-absorbed and meeting the demands of interacting with society.⁴⁷⁵

Changing behaviours and attitudes

Changing life-style habits

Character and habits affect the likelihood of the success of cures and the ease with which passions can be removed. Posidonius acknowledged that even the irrational part of the soul, that which is considered most unruly, can be tamed as it '*gradually conforms to habits in which it is nurtured*', hence the importance of self-reflection, discipline and habituation to manage extreme feelings (Gal. *PHP* 4.7.41). Galen argued that for those who are '*agreeable and easy*' rectifying passions is easy because their '*affective motions are not strong and their reasoning part is not by nature weak and uncomprehending*', making ignorance and bad habits responsible for the decline into passion which are comparatively easy to correct when the agent is willing (Gal. *PHP* 5.5.28). However, for other people, cures are more

⁴⁷⁴ Hadot (1995, 2003) considers that mental exercises of this nature 'raise up Mankind from individuality and particularity to universality and objectivity' (p.242).

⁴⁷⁵ Cf. Reydams-Schils (2005) pp. 83-113. For the brotherhood of mankind, see pp. 97-8.

difficult: for instance, in those whose constitution produces necessary affective motions which are '*great and violent*' and which has a '*weak and uncomprehending*' reasoning part. Here, for character improvement, the reasoning part requires '*knowledge of the truth, and the affective movements must be blunted by habituation to good practices*' (Gal. *PHP* 5.5.28). These views partly correspond to Seneca's argument about the importance of education in young children and moulding their spirit and personalities as they are forming. While he may disagree with the idea of different 'parts' of the mind, Seneca too holds that with a heightened self-awareness from practising the spiritual exercises, men can amend their habits. This practice will offer long-term solutions to the problem of *ira* because self-knowledge breaks the cycle of becoming angry.

Many philosophers were interested in how physiognomy affects an individual's temperament and by extension, the extent to which inclinations towards anger can be changed and the efforts required to do this.⁴⁷⁶ Posidonius believed that those with broad chests (animals and men) are warmer and thus more prone to anger, while those with wide hips are colder and more cowardly (Gal. *PHP* 5.5.22).⁴⁷⁷ Comparably, Seneca draws attention to blonde-haired and ruddy people who are extremely hot-tempered because their blood is active and restless (2.19.5). The combination of elements that have been prescribed at birth cannot be changed (particularly in those prone to anger) but there are practical ways to control character through awareness of limitations.⁴⁷⁸ Seneca is convinced that hot-tempered people can minimise their likelihood of passionate outbursts by avoiding alcohol which fuels passions by increasing heat (cf. 2.19.5, 2.20.2). Such people should tire themselves through exercise to reduce their heat and cause their excessive fever to subside (2.20.3). However, everyone must avoid carrying out onerous tasks or engaging the mind by too many interests (2.20.3). The mind should be

⁴⁷⁶ Cf. Evans (1950) pp. 169-73.

⁴⁷⁷ Cf. Gal. *PHP* 5.5.23-4.

⁴⁷⁸ Aristotle apparently defined an individual's character according to the mixture of elements (Gal. *PHP* 5.5.27).

restricted to pleasurable arts, being soothed by poetry and gripped by history to avoid becoming roused into passionate responses (3.9.1. Cf. 3.6.6, 3.7.1-2, 3.9.3).⁴⁷⁹

Posidonius had proposed that aesthetic activities be used to manage destructive passions as they cannot be cured by reason. Instead, they must be exhausted and persuaded until they are sufficiently calm to listen to reason (Gal. *PHP* 5.6.29-32. Cf. *Ep.* 94.5-6). He recommended the uplifting pleasures of music, drama and poetry in combination with changes in diet and exercise (cf. Gal. *PHP* 5.5.29-35, 5.6.19-22). These views were influenced by Pythagoras who is accredited with discovering the harmonic principles governing lyre strings (cf. Cic. *Tusc.* 4.1.3; Plut. *Mor.* 441E).⁴⁸⁰ Seneca draws upon this theory when he cites Pythagoras' use of music to soothe and avert anger (3.9.2) and he admits the inspiration he received from Pythagoras (*Ep.* 108.17).⁴⁸¹ He also notes that green objects are soothing and pleasant pursuits ease a troubled mind and prevent people from becoming angry (3.9.2). The corporeal nature of Posidonius' strategies might suggest that he believed that extirpation of passions is impossible, making the aim to keep them under control. In contrast, Seneca combines physical and behavioural habits with spiritual exercises to assist in maintaining or reinstating reason and for the complete removal of anger.

Here, as elsewhere, Seneca follows Sextius, a Roman philosopher who fused Pythagoreanism with Stoicism and apparently founded a (short-lived) school during Augustus' reign.⁴⁸² Part of the practices involved daily self-

⁴⁷⁹ Cf. Staley (2010) pp. 36-41. Similarly, the Epicureans are reported to have proposed that the mind is distracted from thoughts about suffering, grievances and revenge and contemplates pleasures instead (cf. Cic. *Tusc.* 3.33, 35, 76). They recommended learning Epicurus' texts to the extent that one would automatically consider anything external to be of no importance (Phld. *lr.* 47.39-41; Diog. Laert. 10.12). Cf. Procopé (1998) p. 185; Tsouna (2007a) pp. 217-8.

⁴⁸⁰ Cf. Kalimtzis (2012) pp. 28-9.

⁴⁸¹ Cf. Staley (2010) pp. 76-7.

⁴⁸² Seneca regularly drew from Sextius' work and provides many biographical details, for example, his vegetarianism (*Ep.* 108.18) and that despite being well-bred he refused the position of Senator offered by Julius Caesar (*Ep.* 44.2; 98.13). Cf. 2.36.5, 3.36.1; *Ep.* 59.7; 64.2-5; 73.12-5; *QNat.* 7.32.2; Griffin (1976, 1992) pp. 37-42; Morford (2002) pp. 133-4; Sellars (2014) p.100.

examination and abstinence from meat, both of which Seneca adopted at points in his life (*Ep.* 108.17-22). Sextius proposed that it is helpful for an angry person to view himself in the mirror because *ira*'s ugliness makes him unrecognisable even to himself and by extension demonstrates the vileness of the passion's consequences (2.36.1). This simple technique is one from which even non-philosophers can benefit and demonstrates Seneca's attempt to be inclusive in his advice, but it has not escaped censure for its bizarre nature. In the midst of rage, it is unlikely that someone would remember to do this, and he may be impressed by how menacing he appears and be satisfied by his frightening appearance.⁴⁸³ The impossibility of this technique may be true in certain cases, but this does not rule out its potential success in others.

Changing behaviour

Alongside amending habits is changing actions and the choice of company is one way to develop a more suitable approach to meeting Seneca's requirements. He recommends avoidance of scenarios which are likely to cause irritation, such as public places and crowds (cf. 3.9.3, 3.37.1).⁴⁸⁴ In the same way that physical diseases spread from person to person, so the mind spreads its faults (3.8.1). Thus, it is important to keep good company of those who neither worry nor are petty (3.8.1) and to associate with frank, temperate people, who will not provoke anger. Even more beneficial are those who are yielding, kind and polite (3.8.5). The company of such men also provides an opportunity to discourse on virtue, practise it and in doing so, perfect one's character (cf. 3.8.1ff.).⁴⁸⁵ Nature has provided humans with the 'seeds/*semina*' for knowledge, though this is acquired by the individual through observing exemplary behaviour and learning from this what constitutes excellence in character and actions (*Ep.* 120.4-5). Associating with like-minded and wise men offers a positive and supportive influence. Such men remove the temptation to become angry because they inspire care for other people appropriately, reinforce the sphere of influence and

⁴⁸³ Cf. Williams (1997) p. 212.

⁴⁸⁴ Cf. *Ep.* 5.2-3; 7; 25.7; 123.6-9; Gunderson (2015) pp. 77-8.

⁴⁸⁵ Cf. *Ep.* 6.6; 7.8-10; 62.3; 85.41; 94.40ff.

provide guidance for the appropriate selection of externals, so long as this advice is offered constructively and is positively received. Just as animals can be tamed, when living with tranquil people individuals can be improved by accepting the advice of wise men and by emulating their positive examples so that personal weaknesses will not be indulged (3.8.3. Cf. *Ep.* 94.40ff.).

Changing behaviour does not necessarily depend on holding philosophical views. Seneca's practical advice to avoid confrontational scenarios, in particular abrasive individuals, can be applied by non-philosophers to enable everyone to avoid becoming angry. However, his encouragement of keeping good company extends beyond practical behavioural measures by encouraging reflection on virtue with good men. In addition, he turns to the Stoic theory of assent by suggesting that people recognise behavioural cues, such as pre-passions and correctly interpreting (and assenting) to impressions will enable rational responses to initial reactions, even in emotionally charged environments. Then anxiety and anger can be replaced with measured reasoning, so that all adversity can be handled with impunity. This is easier to do within a community with shared interests in pursuing virtue, than as an individual among others not aiming for the same goal. Greater empowerment regarding correct choices in areas which can be controlled and an acceptance of what can realistically be achieved means not using others as an excuse for errors in judgement and incorrect responses. This leads to the development and understanding of the responsibility to act in the correct manner, taking care to keep the mind healthy in the same way as the body (*Ep.* 92.33ff.).

Seneca also advises humour in response to a provocative situation: '*Stand back a bit farther and laugh! — Recede longius et ride!*' (3.37.3). He recalls how, after being hit in the ear, Socrates exclaimed, in jest, that it was a shame that men did not realise they needed a helmet when they were walking outside (3.11.2).⁴⁸⁶ In a similar vein, following his tutor Sotion

⁴⁸⁶ Cf. Diog. Laert. 6.41, 54; Plut. *Mor.* 10C.

(reported by Stob. *Flor.* 3.20.53), Seneca links Heraclitus of Ephesus with the atomist Democritus of Abdera because they provide alternative responses to anger – crying and laughter accordingly – both of which are preferable to rage. Democritus was known for constantly laughing and not taking other people’s affairs seriously (2.10.5. Cf. 3.6.3) though modern scholars question the validity of this.⁴⁸⁷ Discarding the question of historical accuracy and focusing on Seneca’s purposes, these examples show there is no room for anger, but laughter or tears instead (2.10.5). Later in *De Ira*, Seneca refers to Democritus’ ‘*sound doctrine/salutare praeceptum*’ (3.6.3. Cf. Democritus fr. 68B3 DK), that tranquillity is only achievable by avoiding most public activities, particularly those which require strength greater than one’s own as a busy man is exposed daily to people and things which create anger (3.9.3. Cf. 3.37.1; *Ep.* 7).

Changing values and rejecting externals

Anger can be avoided with changes in value systems and readdressing what holds personal importance to avoid over-reacting to trivial issues. Indeed, it is attaching incorrect value to petty things that causes anger and madness (3.34.2-3. Cf. 2.25-6). This is sensible, practical advice, but in philosophical terms for Stoics this change involves being prudent in the pursuit of externals. Decisions about what to select should be based on considering what is truly ‘healthy’ or beneficial and those which are genuinely ‘praiseworthy’. That is, only ‘goods’ and ‘preferred’ indifferents which promote well-being and secure basic needs such as food and good health should be chosen.⁴⁸⁸ In this respect, according to Stoic theory, everyone needs to learn to treat the circumstances from which passions arise, and learn what really constitutes good and evil and, most usefully, eliminate the false beliefs about them (Cic. *Tusc.* 4.60). Admittedly, this is a difficult task which is rarely achieved and not readily accessible to those

⁴⁸⁷ Cooper and Procopé (1995) raise concerns that although Democritus wrote about attaining ‘good spirits’ and joy, the extant fragments do not provide evidence of his laughing at people or their misfortunes (p. 50 n. 17). Kaster (2010) quotes Democritus saying something contrary to the legend, that men should weep, not laugh at human misfortunes (pp. 112-3 n. 156 Cf. Democr. fr. 68B107a DK).

⁴⁸⁸ For Zeno’s division of ‘things’, see p. 14 n. 22.

who are not educated in philosophy because this advice will neither seem appealing nor well-grounded (Cic. *Tusc.* 4.60).

To avoid anger that arises from dependence on externals and the frustration from losing them, it is important to exercise discipline without them. For example, enduring physical hardship, eating plain food, only drinking water and living modestly.⁴⁸⁹ Seneca complains that luxury feeds anger and to avoid this, the mind should be treated roughly so that it only feels serious blows (2.25.4). Seneca argues that pleasure should be avoided because pursuing it is like chasing a wild beast (*Beat.* 14.2). By abstaining from relatively harmless pleasures men can learn and practise self-control to avoid becoming its slave, a view which sensibly challenges an Epicurean lifestyle. This restraint will prevent allowing pleasure to overrule reason and satisfaction can be gained from successes in achieving this.⁴⁹⁰ Simple living hardens people against misfortune and perceived pleasure from and dependence on externals and secures confidence to know that if minor discomforts can be overcome, it is possible to deal with the worst things that can happen (cf. *Ep.* 5; 87.3; 90).

The impermanence of material things, including people, should be accepted as well as the transitory nature of feelings such as pleasure, pain and the like. Unsurprisingly, many people would refuse to 'deprive' themselves, under the misconception that a life of materialism offers them security. They forget that these things can be taken away as quickly as they were achieved (Cf. *Ep.* 36.6; 66.44). This is certainly applicable to the many people who prefer material gains and public success in political and business matters (which is acceptable to Stoicism only if these 'things' are acknowledged to be 'preferred indifferents', not ascribed any true value and are correctly used) to the exclusion of personal restraint. Appropriately valuing externals means that people are not disadvantaged by not having many 'things' as

⁴⁸⁹ Cf. *Ep.* 15.3; 18.5ff.; 51; 84.11ff.; 87; 104.34ff. Simple living was common practice among early Stoics. Renowned for his poverty and industry, such as working at night drawing water, Cleanthes dedicated himself to philosophy and self-improvement (Diog. Laert. 7.168-71). Cf. Plut. *Mor.* 830D.

⁴⁹⁰ For a philosopher's versus a fool's pleasure, see *Beat.* 10.3.

the non-philosopher may fear or become angered by. Rather it means that an individual is selective in where he places value, which in the long term allows him to live a more fulfilling life and most significantly reduces the causes of anger due to comparatively unimportant things which are beyond his sphere of control.

A more acceptable criticism of Stoicism might be that there are challenges in the correct selection of things. Decisions relating to choosing externals are overwhelming, particularly due to the complexity of the large realm of externals. This issue would not be problematic for a dedicated Stoic who knows the true value of externals and will select them accordingly. Such problems arise either due to a misunderstanding of Stoic philosophy, or, among those who are not committed to living a Stoic life, may often be due to a fear that they are disadvantaged and deprived by not selecting conventional things of value. Making rational decisions while simultaneously nullifying basic instincts is difficult and it is frustrating when things do not work out as expected or are impossible to control. It is also challenging to separate the actual event from opinion and even after reflection, some men may already have acted incorrectly. It is hard to choose the right thing at all times and there is the problem of seeing things as indifferent (when the term is not interpreted in the true Stoic meaning of not affecting an individual's well-being). Making this mistake may result in people becoming 'indifferent' in the common sense of the word i.e. not caring about anything.

An obstacle to this approach is that it is easy to get it 'wrong'. Careful management is needed to fulfil social responsibilities by recognising indifferents correctly, by understanding that they are things which in essence have no moral value, even if they appear to have value in themselves (such as shelter and food) and that they can be pursued only by using a virtuous means. Reactions may be too slow when the situation demands a fast response if the Stoic principles have not been properly internalised. This is a problem particularly when initial responses and feelings are confusing, which means it is not possible to recognise them quickly enough in the initial stages to prevent them from progressing.

Changing attitudes towards other people

Although, according to Stoicism, other people are considered to be externals and thus personal flourishing does not depend upon relationships with them, nonetheless, as preferred indifferents, personal relationships are a great concern for Stoics, with the caveat of not becoming over-reliant on other people. As individuals are all parts of one great body, mutual affection and being disposed to friendship is natural to man (cf. 2.32.1, 3.43.5).⁴⁹¹ Seneca connects *clementia* with *humanitas* suggesting this is part of being virtuous to improve interpersonal relations as well as to promote Stoicism as a 'caring' School (cf. 1.20.1).⁴⁹² While Stoics recognise that friends are, to a certain extent, instrumental, their focus is on friendship's intrinsic value and that it is choiceworthy for its own sake (*Ep.* 9.12).⁴⁹³ However, orthodox Stoic attitudes to other people are complex.⁴⁹⁴ For instance, honouring parents and brothers is regarded '*second place next after the gods*' (Diog. Laert. 7.120), yet, in his *Republic*, Zeno is reported to have argued that only the Sage demonstrates appropriate familial concern because ordinary people are '*enemies*', leading each other towards false views rather than towards virtue (Diog. Laert. 7.33).

Seneca too urges caution against accepting (wrong) advice from loved ones which is based on philosophical ignorance about what is truly good. He advises deafness/*surdum* against loved ones who '*pray for evils with good intentions — bono animo mala precantur*', by which he means those who encourage political glory and honour believing this to equate with happiness (*Ep.* 31.2).⁴⁹⁵ These concerns emphasise the importance of keeping the company of good men, knowledgeable of virtue, as opposed to blindly following parental advice. The problems arise with men who are not yet wise because friendship '*exists only between the wise and good, by reason of their likeness to one another*', which is why Zeno defined a friend as '*Another I*' with whom lives are shared and they are treated as a man would

⁴⁹¹ Cf. *Clem.* 2.5.3; *Ep.* 88.30; *Ep.* 95.52.

⁴⁹² Cf. *Clem.* 1.5.3-5, 20.3; *Constant.* 2.32.2; 3.5.7; 32.3.

⁴⁹³ Cf. *Cic. Fin.* 3.70-1; *Cic. Leg.* 1.49.

⁴⁹⁴ Cf. Graver (2007) pp. 175-85; Long (2013).

⁴⁹⁵ Cf. Gloyn (2017) p. 172.

himself (Diog. Laert. 7.124).⁴⁹⁶ Friendship is restricted to the wise because only such men have ‘*concord regarding the matters of life*’, that being the knowledge of goods and true friendship depends on ‘*trust and firmness*’ which the ordinary man is not capable of possessing because of his contradictory beliefs: the tie between fools is simply ‘*their needs and opinions*’ (Stob. *Ecl.* 2.7.11m).⁴⁹⁷ For Seneca, and many Stoics, friendship is a relationship bringing reciprocal benefits (*Ep.* 35; 81.12) by providing opportunities to display virtue and share excellence of character (*Ep.* 34.2).⁴⁹⁸

For Seneca, all men have the capacity to form close relationships with other people. Friendship is an important part of being human because the sociability provided to man by God makes him dominant over animals (*Ben.* 4.18.1) and philosophy provides ‘*fellow-feeling/sensum communem*’ i.e. ‘*sympathy and sociability/humanitatem et congregationem*’ (*Ep.* 5.4). Furthermore, true friendship is a form of non-egoistic self-love because *oikeiosis* and sociability are normal to man.⁴⁹⁹ Seneca argues that while it is possible to live without friends (as they are externals), life is enhanced by their presence (cf. *Ep.* 9; 48).⁵⁰⁰ Self-sufficiency is compatible with ideal friendship: despite being content when alone, company is preferable, a preferred indifferent in accordance with nature. A Sage remains self-sufficient (*se contentus est*) even with the loss of a limb and could manage with the other parts yet would prefer (*maluit*) not to lose the limb (*Ep.* 9.4). Maintaining and gaining new friends brings joy (*Ep.* 9.6; 109.9-11) and friends should be sought for the purpose of practising friendship (*exerceat amicitiam*) and displaying virtue, not for the sake of utility (*Ep.* 94.8-9). Seneca goes as far as to argue that it is unvirtuous to live solely for yourself because humans are designed for social union (*Ep.* 48.2f. Cf. *Ep.* 95.52; Cic. *Fin.* 3.60-70). Thus, anger is unnatural because it prohibits appropriate

⁴⁹⁶ Cf. Gunderson (2015) pp. 78-9.

⁴⁹⁷ Translated by Pomeroy (1999) p. 89. Cf. *Ep.* 81.10; Cic. *Amic.* 20; Long (2013) p. 219.

⁴⁹⁸ Cf. Gill (2013) p. 145; Long (2013) pp. 230-1.

⁴⁹⁹ Cf. Long (2013) p. 224.

⁵⁰⁰ The wise man Stilpo lost his family when his country was seized but remained *eudaemonic* when talking to the enemy Demetrius, affirming that he had lost nothing and retains all his goods i.e. everything he needed was within him (*Ep.* 9.18-9).

concern for and engagement with other people or offering them assistance when they are in need to protect them from themselves (*Ep.* 10.2).

Above all, Seneca encourages increased compassion, greater tolerance and consideration of other people's perspectives and acceptance of them as erroneous rather than malicious. This enables the suspension of anger, rather than jumping to conclusions over suspicions and becoming angry with innocent men (2.22.4. Cf. 3.12.3). Seneca provides practical considerations on which judgements should be based. For instance, when judging perceived offences, the character and purpose of the offender should be considered.⁵⁰¹ A child is excused by his age and that he does not know what is wrong (2.30.1) or the adult may be repaying a previous injury that has been caused (2.28.5. Cf. 3.26.5). The limits of human nature ought to be remembered to ensure fair judgements because it is unjust to blame the individual for a universal fault (3.26.3. Cf. 2.28.1). Seneca advises being more just to transgressors, being more heedful to those who rebuke and not to become angry with the gods, as it is humans not divine power that produce mortal suffering (2.28.4). Through explaining the causes of events, Seneca seeks to demonstrate that there are alternatives to angry responses and that these should be implemented to prevent the passion from arising.

Seneca adopts the sensible advice of changing attitudes towards other people as a cure for anger by incorporating Stoic attitudes towards how people ought to be treated. Those who make mistakes should not cause anger because it is part of unrefined human nature (2.10.6. Cf. *Clem.* 1.6.3). Such men do not realise that it is this which is making them behave the way they do: '*errors shouldn't make us angry — non esse irascendum erroribus*' because they are caused in people who are stumbling about in the darkness of ignorance (2.10.1). These arguments confirm the appropriate care for mankind that Stoicism propounds. A man has no reason to hate or be angry with someone whom he is trying to save, in the same way he would not hate a part of his body he has cut off (1.15.2). He is driven to heal in whatever

⁵⁰¹ Cf. 2.10.1, 2.30.1-2, 3.12.2, 3.24.3.

way is necessary, in the same way as mad dogs, savage oxen, sick sheep and babies who are weak or abnormal are destroyed, not through anger but reason, to end their pain (1.15.2. Cf. 2.10.7).

Seneca promotes forgiveness through understanding the pain of the injurer and excusing him and this should be extended to mankind (2.10.2. Cf. 2.34.2).⁵⁰² Choosing forgiveness over anger would mean that the faults which would cause anger become, instead, symptoms of the other person's underlying sickness and thus give the impetus to treatment. This is a way of replacing anger and its pain by looking towards future reconciliation and preventing *ira* from harming innocent victims, such as those who were not involved in the initial injury. It is also a means through which, by taking a different attitude towards other people's behaviour, anger can be avoided entirely. Seneca's references to forgiveness in *De Ira* are confusing when compared with *De Clementia*, which focuses on the judicial context of this response; here he stresses that *clementia* does not involve forgiveness (*Clem.* 2.7.1ff.). Seneca uses 'forgiveness' in *De Ira* as being synonymous with *clementia* or as a part of temperance in that it involves restraining impulses such as angry responses and is thus part of virtue. Forgiveness in this sense involves compassionate understanding of other people's perspective and understanding how the errors in their judgements cause problems. It is the realisation that ignorance is the origin of personal flaws and it reinforces the need for self-examination to address mistakes and for self-improvement.

In the same way that a commander may be stern with an individual soldier but must refrain when an army deserts, the Sage does not become angry because he understands the injustice and danger of such a response to universal problems (2.10.4). Indeed, the Stoic never feels harm in the first place because he does not allow other people's actions to impact on his well-being. He accepts things as they are and moves on. These are examples that can be followed by everyone, especially when it is

⁵⁰² For Seneca's deviation from the orthodox Stoic view about forgiveness, see p. 90.

remembered that everyone is guilty of errors at some point (3.24.4) and it is more profitable to make and keep friends than enemies (3.28.2). With this approach comes kindness, which Seneca believes can break the cycle of injury and can defuse aggressive situations. Animosity dies if it is ended by one side (2.34.5) and using discernment instead of anger acquits many of the 'offenders' (3.29.2). Seneca's examples illustrate how, by changing attitudes towards other people's perceived failings, men can resolve to assist instead of becoming angry with them. This demonstrates the widespread benefits of removing anger beyond improving personal mental well-being and meets a Stoic expectation of living as a citizen of the universe.

Personal sacrifices need to be made without resentment, but this can cause challenges and can provoke frustration to the point of anger. For example, for non-philosophers and people during the early stages of practising philosophy, it is difficult to separate what is 'good for me' if it conflicts with what is 'good for others'. Part of resolving such conflict comes from implementing Stoic ideals of *oikeiosis/conciliatio/appropriatio*, a natural progression for individuals as they mature which involves demonstrating an increased concern for and extending obligations to people beyond the immediate family (cf. *Ep.* 121.11-2).⁵⁰³ Using this concept as a benchmark for judgements, particularly in relation to other people, can help direct behaviour away from anger and its destructive consequences by focusing on ways in which the individual can contribute to the greater good and accept that it is his responsibility to do this. It could be argued that living by Stoic doctrines makes it difficult to advance socially, politically and economically because of the personal sacrifices required for self-improvement. However, the Stoic attitude towards what is in man's control does not lead to passivity or limit an individuals' power. This is because Stoicism advocates personal independence, freedom, self-sufficiency and

⁵⁰³ Cf. Cic. *Fin.* 3.16ff., 62-3, 76; Cic. *Nat. D.* 2.133ff.; Diog. Laert. 7.85ff.; Plut. *De Stoic. rep.* 1038b; Hierocles *apud* Stob. 4.67.1-673.11 (LS 57G); Pembroke (1971); Striker (1983); Engberg-Pedersen (1986) and (1990); Sellars (2006) pp. 107-9; Gloyn (2017) pp. 16-9.

free speech.⁵⁰⁴ The possibility of fulfilling one's potential and being socially successful through understanding man's sphere of control is demonstrated by the fact that many ancient Stoics were wealthy, well-educated and of great political standing. Indeed, some progressed to rule or advise leaders (Seneca was Nero's advisor and tutor and Marcus Aurelius was Emperor).

Critics have argued against treating loved ones as indifferents as they believe that intimate affection is part of being human.⁵⁰⁵ Viewing everything apart from virtue, including other people, as 'indifferents' has sparked criticism of Stoicism as not being 'either intelligible or tolerable'.⁵⁰⁶ The Stoic doctrine of indifferents need not be seen in such a negative light if it is interpreted to be arguing that a degree of detachment makes it possible to best serve friends and family as this protects men from being governed by unruly passions which are known to damage relationships. Some critics go so far as to argue that the family's welfare should be cared for because it is more than just a preferred indifferent and that it is difficult to reconcile a doctrine of indifference with one of 'fellow-feeling'.⁵⁰⁷ I interpret Stoicism to be advising caution against excessive love towards other people, not that no concern should be shown and I hold that their doctrine encourages acting for the overall good by showing equal concern for everyone as a means to facilitate harmony across mankind. It is also a form of self-preservation from pain resulting from loss; it seeks to restore a personal sense of agency by helping people to recognise their sphere of control and that character is what is important, all of which are positive lessons.

By focusing attention on their choices, individuals can be seen to be disregarding other people's feelings and being selfish. Stoics focus on the individual's responsibility to change himself so that he can benefit other people, as well as cultivating the best possible life for himself. This is why Seneca believes that the company kept is so important to moral

⁵⁰⁴ Cf. Littlewood (2004) pp. 25-6.

⁵⁰⁵ Cf. Sorabji (2000) pp. 181-4; Nussbaum (2001) pp. 359-60.

⁵⁰⁶ Cf. Williams (1997) p. 213.

⁵⁰⁷ Cf. Sorabji (2000) pp. 173-5.

improvement⁵⁰⁸ and wisdom should be shared, as does Seneca (*Ep.* 6.1). Their attitudes towards the removal of passions may expose Stoics to an accusation of being uncaring and unmoved by other people. For instance, they may be perceived as cold and unemotional because the cerebral approach to life could be too analytical by over-valuing the rational side and ignoring or neglecting the emotional. This may have a detrimental effect on inter-personal relationships, as not engaging emotionally with other people's difficulties may cause tension, making the other person more emotional to the point of becoming confrontational. Practising *constantiae* as opposed to passions can resolve this complaint: through rational, measured responses which these feelings provide it is possible to relate to other people and meet their needs in a reasoned way, and feel both wishing and joy without being manipulated by passions.⁵⁰⁹

Stoics could also be interpreted as being aloof, self-righteous and narcissistic because they can appear to be rebelling against the prevailing views of the masses and ignoring popular opinion in favour of seeing virtue as the only good (a view which may not be widely shared or well-regarded). These philosophers may seem to be arrogant revolutionaries, which can lead to alienation, even persecution, by those who do not understand, feel threatened, are suspicious of or bewildered by the Stoic value system. In reality, while there is the danger of neglecting the external world if an individual withdraws too far by becoming too self-focused, Stoics believe it is possible to balance private and public life. They argue that contributions can be made to society beyond the holding of political positions, such as by helping people improve themselves through philosophy and through appropriate punishments for wrongdoing (cf. *Tranq.* 3.1; Diog. Laert. 7.121).⁵¹⁰ Practising Stoicism in the community reduces feelings of isolation

⁵⁰⁸ Cf. *Ep.* 3.8.1ff.; 7.8-10; 62.3; 85.41; 94.40ff.

⁵⁰⁹ For *constantiae*, see pp. 84-5.

⁵¹⁰ There was a positive response to Stoicism from some rulers. For example, the Macedonian king, Antigonus Gonatas, summoned Zeno to his court: Zeno refused but sent Philonides and Persaeus, who later became governor of Corinth (Diog. Laert. 7.6-9). Stoicism was particularly influential during the Julio-Claudian era (from Augustus to Nero) where Stoics were appointed to key political roles as well as being moral advisors to the Emperor and resident tutors for wealthy families. For appropriate choices about involvement in public life, see Gill (2003, 2006) p. 37; Schofield (2015) pp. 78-80.

and the temptation to become over-engaged in one's inner world. Indeed, perfecting character through Stoic exercises, cultivating social virtues such as justice etc., makes people better and therefore more useful to society. Benefitting other people is crucially important to a Stoic's philanthropy: imparting wisdom and virtue is more important than generosity with material goods.

Preventative measures

Do not invite anger

Seneca does not restrict his advice on dealing with anger to applying philosophical techniques: he offers common-sense and practical guidance which does not depend on having a philosophical outlook or understanding Stoic doctrines. For example, it is important not to invite anger but to ignore injury and rumours as it is easy to believe immediately what is heard and then become angry before forming a judgement about it (2.22.3-4).⁵¹¹ The spirit should be subdued in provocative situations, in the same way athletes accept blows and pain to exhaust their opponent before striking victoriously, not through anger, but when prompted by advantage (2.14.2). Seneca cites the example of the famous trainer, Pyrrhus, who taught his pupils not to become angry, to support these claims (2.14.3). If all these approaches have failed and anger prevails, it must be relinquished as soon as possible. Seneca encourages restraint as the issue is not the affront itself, but how it is responded to. This is possible and even proud despots have repressed their habitual cruelty (3.11.3. Cf. 3.22). If an individual is insulted, he should ask if it is worse than that suffered in the second century BC by the head of the Stoa, Diogenes of Babylon, when a youth spat on him during his lectures about anger. In true Stoic fashion, Diogenes bore the injury calmly and wisely, admitting that he was not angry and that he was unsure whether he should be cross (3.38.1). The purpose of this story is to show appropriate behaviour in the case of being assaulted as opposed to resorting to anger.⁵¹²

Resisting anger at its first stages and delaying responses

⁵¹¹ Cf. 2.24.1-2., 2.29.2-4, 3.11.1, 3.12.1; 3.25.3; *Clem.* 1.7.3.

⁵¹² Cf. Kaster (2010) p. 128 n. 365.

Anger can be halted by resisting it at its first stages (cf. 1.8.1, 3.30.1) and it is easier to stop vices when they start (*Ep.* 85.9; 116.2-3). The first involuntary physiological effects need to be identified to prevent them from progressing to real passions. The onset of passions can be recognised, like sickness which occurs after initial symptoms and how there are signs before a storm and rain (3.10.2). Seneca uses the example of how epileptics take measures to prevent a fit and if it is unavoidable, remove themselves to somewhere private to illustrate how one should behave when feeling pre-passions (3.10.3). The disorder should be identified, comprehended, and its power stopped before it spreads, by understanding personal irritations (3.10.4), just as swollen eyes or inflamed parts of the body are not touched (3.39.2). Passions are subjective because people are affected differently, even by the same things, making it particularly important to identify and protect personal weak points, which is possible through *recognitio* as well as taking rational sensible steps without considering them in a philosophical context.

Novatus challenges the value of a cure that calms anger when it is already beginning to calm itself, which Seneca defends by arguing that it hastens the subsidence of anger, prevents its recurrence and confuses even the initial stage which it had not attempted to soothe because it removes all the weapons of revenge (3.39.3). Self-restraint and avoiding anger are also discussed in *De Clementia* where the value of control is placed over glory from revenge (*Clem.* 1.17.3). In all cases of anger Seneca insists that: '*The inclination to rage should be stopped before its provocation — voluntas oportet ante saeuiendi quam causa deficiat*' (*ibid* 1.8.7). This is because anger in rulers results in death and creates a cycle of violence, in the same way excessive pruning of trees encourages regrowth (*ibid* 1.8.7).

Delaying a response to the alleged 'injury' is the most constructive way of dealing with unavoidable anger-provoking situations. Initial impressions should not automatically be assented to without considering their meaning because inaccurate assessments of the situation are based on passions and not reason. Seneca believes delay to be the greatest cure for anger –

'Maximum remedium irae mora est' – and proposes deliberation as opposed to forgiveness because the initial response causes damage but withdrawal will make it cease (2.29.1). In the case of insults, questions should be asked about the validity of the insult, the reliability of the insulter and the fact that it is the judgement that causes distress, not the insult itself. Delay allows the opportunity not for pardoning, but for the reasoned assessment of the situation because this is where errors most frequently occur (3.32.2). Results will be more effective from suspending judgement (3.40.1). The first stages of anger should be resisted because its causes are the belief of being wronged which may, on reflection, be an incorrect assessment because time reveals the truth (2.22.2). Consequently, it is advisable to act in the same way as a judge does, casting his sentence only after hearing all the evidence because there may be no proof to support the initial impression (cf. 2.29.3, 3.12.4).⁵¹³ Anger's immediate responses are heavy, such as resorting to the sword, capital punishment, chains, prison or starvation, when Seneca proposes that light flogging is more appropriate which is why anger should be absent when administering punishments (3.32.2).

Anger will be lessened with delay and it will be completely destroyed if it is attacked bit by bit, making it more manageable to overcome (2.29.1). It is difficult to withhold a reaction, but Seneca insists postponement to be anger's greatest remedy, because, through delay, the initial strength of feeling lessens thus removing or lessening the *'darkness that overwhelms the mind — caligo quae premit mentem'* (3.12.4). He continues to say that some of the offences which caused the anger will decrease in an hour, certainly in a day and others will disappear completely (3.12.4). In this respect, delaying a response is empowering, not demeaning, because it is better to wait to issue orders based on reasoning rather than speak under the dictation of anger: thus, control over the situation can be retained. Seneca uses the example of Quintus Fabius Maximus, who became known as *'The Delayer/Cunctator'* for his tactics after Hannibal's victory at Cannae, to prove that delaying responses enables appropriate reactions and

⁵¹³ Cf. Nussbaum (1993b) pp. 99-105.

planning in warfare, neither of which is possible in anger (1.11.5). Seneca introduces another interlocutor, Hieronymus of Rhodes, a Peripatetic philosopher who inquires about the purpose of biting one's lips prior to beating a man to conceal and control one's feelings (1.19.3. Cf. Hieronymus (fr. 21 Wehrli)). Seneca shows it is necessary not to act in anger by asking rhetorical questions about how people would react to the sight of inappropriate behaviour by officials.

Delaying reactions objectifies the issue, so its importance and relevance can be truly understood in the context of a bigger picture, so that a more effective course of action can be chosen. There is the danger of extensive procrastination when a timescale to react or deliberate is not set. A Stoic does not suffer from this as he sets a time to address the thought and rather than avoiding it, distances himself and delays his reaction. He uses the delay to consider the outcome of his actions prior to acting and is led by the demands of virtue. This may be challenging at first but again, with practice, the habit will arise instinctively and Seneca offers reassurance that this is possible with hard work and divine support stressing the importance of continual active philosophical engagement (2.13.1-2).

Curing other people

As well as being accountable for personal feelings, individuals have a social responsibility to help other people improve themselves because *humanitas* is at the heart of Stoicism (cf. 1.14.2-3, 3.39ff.). This goal is significant when considering the need to extirpate passions and if not remove, then at least control anger. Part of this task involves re-education to help prevent passions arising in the future. Seneca reports Posidonius' recommendation of precepts, '*persuasion, consolation, and encouragement — suasionem et consolationem et exhortationem*' and, most importantly, the '*investigation of causes/causarum inquisitionem*' which clarifies the distinction between virtue and vice (*Ep.* 95.65). Posidonius' practical advice supported self-improvement by reinforcing the need to understand the cause of the feelings from which changes can be learnt. Similarly, Chrysippus believed distress

to be the dissolution of a man but that it can be entirely rooted out when the cause is identified (Cic. *Tusc.* 3.61).

In the context of assisting mourners to come to terms with their situation and to cease grieving, Cicero compared the views about curing passions offered by Cleanthes and Chrysippus. The former '*teaches the sufferer that what has happened was not an evil — putent malum illud omnino non esse*' and in doing so aimed to change the agent's belief that the object at which the passion was directed has any genuine value or disvalue in reference to the theory of indifferents (Cic. *Tusc.* 3.76). Cleanthes could be criticised because his method is directed at the wise man, as only he understands the nature of indifferents and would not require consolation. The method may educate the individual in terms of the value of 'things', yet it does not soothe the distress because the person may still perceive the cause of distress to be legitimately evil and distress is not always caused by a failure to understand the nature of indifferents but can also be the result of poor character, as is demonstrated by the example of Alcibiades and Socrates (Cic. *Tusc.* 3.77).⁵¹⁴ This is an acceptable concern for Cleanthes' method, but it is also valid to argue that once it is understood that externals are neither good nor evil in nature, disturbances will be removed (cf. Sext. *Math.* 11.130. Cf. Sext. *Math.* 130-40). If this advice is applied to anger and the individual is taught that the perceived injury is not an evil but is indifferent as well as encouraged to acknowledge the disturbances which cause aggravation and distress, it is less likely for such comparatively slight annoyances to develop into full-blown anger. On the other hand, Chrysippus sought to address the passion by teaching that the passion itself is wrong and that the belief about the appropriateness to act is false (Cic. *Tusc.* 3.76). The practical difficulty associated with Chrysippus' approach is that it is difficult to convince someone that passions are not appropriate or the object they are directed at has no value (Cic. *Tusc.* 3.79).⁵¹⁵

⁵¹⁴ Cf. Sorabji (2000) pp. 175-6.

⁵¹⁵ Cf. Graver (2002) pp. 171-3.

A Stoic tends to believe that there exists a natural affection and mutual empathy among mankind, with consideration of other people's perspectives to try to understand their motivations. Such tolerance enables concessions for other people's faults, even in the case of perceived injuries, so that the person does not become an enemy. Instead, efforts could be made to reform them whenever possible or the person could be avoided if improvement is unachievable. Whereas anger, selfishness and cruelty against other people turn men into beasts (*Clem.* 1.25.1), Seneca encourages patience (2.35.2), checking impulses (3.10.1), demonstrating forgiveness (cf. 2.10.2, 34.2) and showing compassion (cf. 2.25.3-4, 3.35.3-4) all of which are possible when not under the direction of passions. It is better to heal than avenge an injury (3.27.1), it is right to judge other people by personal standards and more humane to recognise weaknesses and be kind-hearted (1.14.2). Seneca presents a series of measures to deal with anger in others as an extension of how it can be checked in the self and by practising these, the individual is equally improved because he is practising the virtue he seeks to perfect. The first stage involves chiding the man in the initial stages of anger in private and later in public. Then, if he cannot be corrected by words, he will be checked by public disgrace. Banishment to unknown regions will be the consequence of more serious faults, with imprisonment as a last resort (1.16.2). If none of these measures work, for those whose badness has become inherent and in the case of serial criminals, the kindest response is to kill the man through pity, not anger, to release him from his madness (1.16.3). Despite the suggestion of such extreme measures, Seneca is clear that with the right guidance, difficulties, in particular those caused by anger, can be overcome by moderating thoughts and views.

Part of healing other people involves intervention either to remove the victims from the situation to protect them or to calm the impassioned person and help them delay their reaction until anger has passed (*Cic. Tusc.* 4.78). While this approach is sensible and helpful, it is not always effective because arguably someone cannot be helped mid-passion because such a man would reject advice and chastisement and refuse to surrender the

passion (cf. Gal. *PHP* 4.6.24-34). The person is also not in a rational state capable of taking on any advice which might be given to them while they are in the grip of irrationality. This problem emphasises the importance of recognising the right moment for treatment (Cf. *Helv.* 1.2; Cic. *Tusc.* 4.76). Chrysippus noted that once the ‘inflammation of the passion’ has subsided, reason can return, and in doing so ‘*expose the irrationality of the passion*’ (Gal. *PHP* 4.7.27). Seneca also acknowledges that first signs of anger should not be softened by words, as *ira ‘is deaf and mindless/surda est et amens’* and requires space (3.39.2). Instead, ‘*Remedies are effective when the malady subsides — Remedia in remissionibus prosunt*’ and ‘*Rest is the cure for the first stages of disease — initia morborum quies curat*’ (3.39.2).

There are also practical steps which can be taken to minimise the eruption of anger. By acknowledging personal weaknesses and enlisting the help of friends, people who are likely to lose control can be managed before anger takes hold. For instance, those who cannot tolerate wine and fear they may become rash and insolent on becoming drunk, rely on their friends to remove them from parties. Other men, who have realised that in illness they are unreasonable, warn their friends to ignore their orders when they are sick (3.13.5). *Exempla* illustrate how these methods are successful. For instance, Seneca cites Socrates’ friends who began to recognise that he concealed his anger by lowering his voice and speaking little, which was proof he was struggling with himself (3.13.3).⁵¹⁶ Seneca believes that the Greek philosopher’s iconic status will persuade others to follow Socrates’ example and allow friends to speak freely and not tolerate anger, seeking help while sane (3.13.3-4). Evidently, changes in environment and the offer and acceptance of help, while they may not prevent anger, can certainly manage the potential effect of the individual’s actions and improve conditions for those around him.

⁵¹⁶ Cf. van Hoof (2007) pp. 79-80.

Philosophical ethics can offer the principles by which to act, but there is no universal advice about what to do in specific situations. Anger is a particularly subjective experience and manifests itself in diverse ways, with variations in intensity, display, duration and awareness, with different understandings of the passion depending on the culture and time. Consequently, there is no single way to 'fix' the problem, which is something Seneca acknowledges when he notes that the individual has different needs and prescriptions: '*Our strategy must be based on each person's character — Consilium pro moribus cuiusque capiendum erit*' (3.1.2. Cf. 1.6.4). This requires realistic goal-setting to cater for individual abilities and awareness of personal triggers for anger. There is no 'right' way other than to have full awareness of thoughts and actions according to one's personal nature, rather than adhering to rigid commandments. To be successful in achieving goals requires strategic planning, adaptability, steadfastness, not making rash decisions, following good advisors and reason's guidance.

Through adaptations, one could argue that Seneca's therapeutic techniques may be used in non-philosophical contexts and they can be useful to those who do not share the conviction of ancient doctrines or their world view. For example, it is sensible to educate children in alternative responses to anger, to avoid confrontational situations and delay responses when provoked. To a certain extent, even variations of the spiritual exercises could be practised by non-philosophers if they are used to focus attention on improving how life is lived. This is because they are a way of helping alleviate anxieties about the future and come to terms with the suffering in the past at the same time as giving direction for the present and guiding decisions for the future. However, without the Stoic context, there is a risk that the spiritual exercises could result in procrastination rather than self-improvement. Many of the techniques have the greatest success when applied within a Stoic framework because they encourage questioning about impetuses and world view. Making changes to habits is most effective when it is based on an understanding of the motivation, which can be learned through increased self-awareness, and the rejection of externals depends on understanding the true value of things, knowledge of which Stoicism provides.

Philosophy assists in preventing passions from arising because it enables comprehension of the nature and causes of *adfectus* so that it can be resisted at its first stages and by understanding mankind's role in the cosmic order, *humanitas* can be developed, which helps guide and cure other people. Ultimately, the individual can choose whether to become subject to passions and whether to take the preventive measures offered by Seneca and Stoicism. If appropriately applied, with continuous practice, then the methods Seneca proposes for preventing anger arising and for curing it when it does, will have positive effects. In this way, with an understanding of the doctrines, Stoicism is a successful means to manage and remove passions. A 'cure' can be effective but only with a willingness to make the necessary difficult changes. I progress in Chapter Four to consider the Stoic elements relating to passions in Seneca's tragedies *Medea* and *Thyestes* to consider why Seneca incorporates philosophy in a dramatic context and how this affects his theory of passions.

Chapter Four

Stoic sentiments in Seneca's *Medea* and *Thyestes*

Debate over Seneca's intentions for incorporating philosophical ideas in dramatic contexts has given rise to scholarly disputes about whether, rather than proposing Stoicism, he is in fact taking an anti-Stoic stance. These interpretations will be analysed before exploring the extent to which characters' attitudes and behaviours in *Medea* and *Thyestes* reflect Stoic ideas concerning power, externals, exile, death, fate, divinities, nature and insanity in relation to passions. The aim from identifying Stoic elements extending beyond the immediate focus of anger is to formulate a picture of the way in which the socio-political environment in which the characters exist moulds their attitudes and behaviours, in preparation for a return to the subject of the protagonists' anger and whether they could be cured in Chapter Five. The discussion of these themes here illustrates how, in these plays, Seneca exposes common and non-philosophical assumptions about the world as being obstacles to individuals' well-being through characters who demonstrate errors in evaluative judgements and implies how by adopting Stoic attitudes instead, the problems of passions can be mitigated. I conclude that Seneca uses philosophy in line with generic expectations of tragedy and any perceived Stoicism in the characters is short-lived and self-serving because they appear to be unaware of what Stoicism would expect of them. However, the theatre provides a perfect forum to demonstrate the need for managing reactions to challenging situations.

Relationship of Senecan drama to philosophy

Scholars dispute over interpretations of Seneca's intentions in his plays, ranging from arguing that he promotes Stoicism to claiming that his plays are literary or rhetorical 'showpieces' without philosophical intentions or that they are nihilistic or anti-Stoic. I do not concur that there is no philosophical intent in Seneca's work and that his purpose was to solely create innovative rhetorical masterpieces. Although it is not possible to accurately determine an author's intentions, in my view, Seneca includes philosophical ideas in

his plays to help educate his audience about virtue and vice as well as to establish himself in a tradition of great writers. This is because Stoics regarded philosophy as the supreme subject and also, in more general terms, great literature can be characterised as being thought-provoking and encouraging greater understanding of the psychology of human nature, which Seneca's works seek to achieve in his readers and audience.⁵¹⁷

Scholarship supporting the 'anti-Stoic' stance argues that the non-Stoic elements found within the plays conflict with the School's doctrines to such an extent that it would be incorrect to interpret Seneca as promoting Stoicism in his drama.⁵¹⁸ Such elements include, among other things, the triumph of evil, death and suffering; the powerlessness of reason to overcome passions; the hopelessness of the characters and inherited curses or evil family traits.⁵¹⁹ In addition, there is the problem of malevolent divine machinery – furies, ghosts, envious and injurious deities and a punishing underworld – all of which challenge Stoic notions about God and natural laws and are examples of traditional falsehoods propagated by poets, about which Seneca complains.⁵²⁰ This difficulty is seen particularly in the opening scene of *Thyestes* (*Thy.* lines 1-121), where, in accordance with mythology, a dialogue between the Fury Megaera and the ghost of Tantalus occurs on stage with the former ordering the ghost to cause continued turmoil among the household (line 28) and the vain attempts by Tantalus to stop the ensuing disasters that occur in the play (lines 86ff., 100ff.).⁵²¹

⁵¹⁷ Cf. Motto and Clark (1982) p. 127.

⁵¹⁸ For analysis of these interpretations, see Hine (2004) discussing Leo (1878, 1963) p. 158; Dingel (1974); Colakis (1982) and Armisen-Marchetti (1992). Cf. Sandbach (1975) pp. 160-1; Pratt (1983) pp. 73-131; Curley (1986) pp. 187ff.; Mayer (1988) p. 152 and (1994) esp. pp. 151-2; Rosenmeyer (1989); Littlewood (2004) pp. 16-7.

⁵¹⁹ Cf. Hine (2004) pp. 201-5.

⁵²⁰ Cf. *Beat.* 26.6; *Brev.* 16.5; *Ep.* 115.12-5; *Marc.* 19.4. For the anti-Stoic argument that moral evil creates external events which prevent a world created for individuals' benefit, see Hine (2004) p. 203.

⁵²¹ Curley (1986) argues that the universe in *Thyestes* does not conform to the Stoic cosmos, because Atreus' crime is divinely determined and 'represents the satisfaction of a natural impulse' (p. 178).

Rather than considering this scene to be indicative of Seneca dismissing Stoicism, although it portrays a dark, un-Stoic universe, I interpret it to be showing how dramatic constraints arising from following a mythological story impinge on the presentation of philosophical ideas within a play. I suggest that the scene could be reconciled with the Stoic suggestions elsewhere in the play by considering how a Stoic view of fate is considered to be a combination of two elements. On the one hand, events are predetermined by Providence and many Stoics believe that all events are causally connected and determined by fate, marking the need for *secundum naturam* (*Ep.* 41.9).⁵²² This involves adjusting to circumstances, while not becoming attached to objects and accepting they can be taken away at short notice.

On the other hand, events are brought about by the agent's decisions and actions based on judgements, either born from correct reason or distortions from passions: the individual chooses the action that follows assent, behaviour for which he is accountable (cf. *QNat.* 2.38.3).⁵²³ Arguably, Seneca is echoing Chrysippus' understanding of fate through which action arises from two forces, whereby Tantalus and the Fury are the external cause working together with the internal cause, which is Atreus' personality.⁵²⁴ Tantalus and the Fury can be interpreted to be a divine cause but, because of the constraints of the myth, this is not benevolent. Atreus is 'maddened/rabidus' (*Thy.* line 254) and 'frenzied/attonitus' (line 260) because of the Fury's curse combined with his anger that prevents him from making rational assessments. In this respect, Seneca can present traditional concerns (such as that divine forces engineer actions) and Stoic attitudes about man's sense of agency within the same play without compromising his perceived world view.

⁵²² Cf. *Beat.* 3.3; *Ep.* 45.9; Diog. Laert. 7.149. Chrysippus in *On Providence* Book 4 defined fate as: "an orderly series, established by nature, of all events, following one another and joined together from eternity, and their unalterable interdependence" (Gell. *NA* 7.2.3). Translated by Rolfe (1927-1928) p. 95.

⁵²³ Cf. Setaioli (2014a). For the process of assent, see pp. 57-8.

⁵²⁴ Cf. Gell. *NA* 7.2.7-11; Plut. *De Stoic. rep.* 1056b-57c.

Another argument raised against Seneca's promotion of Stoicism is that his dramas could arguably be open to other philosophical interpretations, such as Epicurean, Academic or Peripatetic provoking ethical reflection from different angles.⁵²⁵ To overlook these suggestions would be to take a too narrow view and one which fails to appreciate the texts as a whole.⁵²⁶ It is correctly noted that to form an accurate assessment of the plays, it is necessary to recognise instances where words and phrases can be non-Stoic too, when ideas can be both Stoic and non-Stoic and the inaccuracy of an assessment which ignores elements that do not meet a Stoic interpretation.⁵²⁷ However, for my purposes, I have chosen to focus on Stoic ideas within particular plays which are included in and derived from the characters' attitudes and behaviours to compare them with those Seneca communicates in his prose.

I am arguing that there are multiple purposes for philosophy's inclusion, particular attention should be paid to its educative role because of Seneca's expressed interest in the human struggle with vices and the need to seek virtuous living and how in his prose, he presents himself as a teacher, guide and doctor to educate his readers in correct values (cf. 1.16.4).⁵²⁸ Consequently, I interpret his plays as being designed to encourage or at the very least 'invite' reflection in the audience with a view to prompting self-improvement and challenge traditional perceptions of the world.⁵²⁹ Seneca appears to be making philosophy accessible to those who are not or have

⁵²⁵ For this suggestion being more probable if the plays were anonymous, see Hine (2004) pp. 176-7 and pp. 208-9.

⁵²⁶ For complaints about Stoic interpretations being reductive, assuming tragedies are 'single-issue' dramas and that Stoic readings are an 'over-simplification' and often tenuous, see Hine (2004) p. 194. For dramas containing a 'plurality of competing voices', see Croisille (1964) p. 277 cited in Hine (2004) p. 194.

⁵²⁷ Cf. Hine (2004) p. 201. I agree that the most constructive way of viewing Seneca's plays would be to take a diagnostic approach which analyses philosophical ethics from the character's perspective and beliefs and human nature and the world without making claims that plays are designed solely to promote a philosophical school, nor to prove an author's intention and to recognise that interpretations from different philosophical stances can prove similar, largely because the ideas communicated are moral commonplaces (cf. Hine (2004) pp. 186ff.).

⁵²⁸ Cf. *Ep.* 8.2-3; *Helv.* 1.2, 2.1ff.; *Marc.* 1.8.

⁵²⁹ A view correctly defended by Hine (2004) pp. 210-1.

not previously been interested in Stoicism by inspiring contemplation about different perspectives such as those relating to fate, gods and determinism.

Philosophical themes

Part of an education in virtue and vice from Seneca requires challenges to traditional perceptions of the world that do not accord with the philosophical understanding of the subject, which he believes should be accepted to be true. It is my contention that in part, Seneca's characters' responses and behaviours can be interpreted to be communicating philosophical themes devised to provoke revision of mistaken opinions and consider a Stoic perspective instead.⁵³⁰ These topics include power (in terms of kingship versus tyranny), externals, exile, death (often of innocent people such as Medea's and Thyestes' children), fate, divinities, nature and madness from 'possession' by an external force or passions. The Choruses communicate these topics in greatest detail.⁵³¹ Where they are naive in their views and observations they create dramatic irony, such as in *Medea*, where the Chorus indiscriminately follow tradition, particularly towards the royal family evidenced by the *epithalamium* (*Med.* lines 56ff.) and in the third ode, they take a traditional, but un-Stoic view, by believing that the suffering of the Argonauts is divine punishment (lines 595-669). Characters are presented according to the dramatist's views and expectations for them.

Power, kingship and tyranny

Undoubtedly reflecting Seneca's personal experience and those of his peers, power and the horrors caused by its abuse are particularly common subjects in his tragedies.⁵³² This reflects his explanations in his prose works that a king and a tyrant are distinguished by their attitude towards punishments.⁵³³ The tyrant is epitomised by cruelty, takes delight in brutality (*Clem.* 1.12.1)⁵³⁴ and inspires fear and resentment (*ibid* 1.12.3-13.3). In contrast, the good king embraces *clementia* (*ibid* 1.12.3) only killing if it is in

⁵³⁰ Whether Seneca's characters 'know' about Stoicism is an important consideration for the analysis of their behaviour, which will be addressed in Chapter Five *passim*.

⁵³¹ Cf. Pratt (1948) p. 6.

⁵³² Cf. Steele (1922a) p. 81; Herington (1966) pp. 430-1; Boyle (2014) p. 190.

⁵³³ Cf. *Clem.* 1.11.4, 1.12.1, 1.13.1; *Ep.* 114.24.

⁵³⁴ Cf. *Clem.* 1.7.3, 1.25.1-2.

the best interest of the state (*ibid* 1.12.1) or to benefit the punished and inspires love because he works towards common safety (*ibid* 1.13.4-5). Methods of exerting power are influenced by a ruler's state of mind, especially when he is driven to turmoil by *adfectus*, as is the case in the kings of *Medea* and *Thyestes*. These plays discuss different styles of kingship, the abuse of position (by Atreus and in Medea's opinion Creon) and the loss of and struggle to regain control as a consequence of their passions and actions carried out in anger.⁵³⁵ These are subjects which provoke philosophical discussion about alternative attitudes towards existing situations, rather than relying on emotional responses. They assist Seneca in his aim to educate his audience in virtue and vice and persuade them of the need to remove anger.⁵³⁶

Kingship in *Medea*

The ruler's attitude towards kingship is significant in *Medea* because it influences how the protagonist behaves. She presents Creon, the King of Corinth, as a tyrant complaining about his arrogance ('*Pelasgo tumidus imperio*', *Med.* line 178), which is supported by the Chorus' complaint about the rarity of free speech (line 109) and Jason's concern over the danger of a king's wrath (line 494).⁵³⁷ She entirely blames Creon for the situation (line 143) in the same way he blames her (lines 266-8). Creon himself demands that his position is recognised, particularly by Medea, demonstrating how kings do not always have citizens' well-being at the heart of their actions and that in Creon's case, he values status and power above fairness (cf. *Med.* lines 188-90, 195).⁵³⁸ Creon's arrogance leads him to fail in his duty to protect his country and prevents him from taking a Stoic view to leadership by which he would replace his authoritarian approach with a humanitarian one, seeing men as a brotherhood. Nonetheless, he insists

⁵³⁵ Cf. Buckley (2013) pp. 216-7.

⁵³⁶ Cf. Tarrant (2006) pp. 14ff. Presenting these issues also meets literary expectations where, for three centuries before Seneca, the temptation of great men to wickedness was a constant philosophical and satirical theme cf. Henry and Henry (1985) pp. 68-9.

⁵³⁷ Indeed, Seneca's Creon does not even express concern for his daughter's well-being, which is an important worry in Euripides' play (cf. Eur. *Med.* lines 282-3, 287-8, 329): instead, he focuses on himself (Sen. *Med.* lines 187ff.). Cf. Boyle (2014) p. 180.

⁵³⁸ Cf. Littlewood (2004) pp. 39-40.

that he is ‘*no vicious, sceptred tyrant — non... sceptrā violentus geram*’ (line 252), nor is he a proud ruler who tramples over the unfortunate (line 253) and cites the marriage of his daughter to a refugee as proof of his concern for other people (lines 254-6). While Creon’s decision to adopt Jason’s sons and raise them as his own (line 284) was in keeping with the ancient Roman tradition of divorced children remaining with their father, it has fatal consequences in a dramatic setting because it provokes Medea’s wrath as she no longer feels a mother (line 171).⁵³⁹ These comments raise questions about the accuracy of Medea’s opinion of him which can be perceived as being biased because of her anger and also there is the issue that Creon is mistaken in how to create social and political stability.

Despite the views about Creon she vocalises, Medea still appeals to him to hear her case as a judge would and his claim to grant her a fair hearing suggests that this may be a possibility (*Med.* lines 202). However, after judging the story of Medea and Jason, Creon absolves Jason of guilt for Medea’s crimes and wants to protect him (lines 262-5). When he concedes to Medea’s plea to extend her stay in Corinth, he threatens her with death if she does not leave the next day (lines 297-9. Cf. lines 183-6, 490-1).⁵⁴⁰ This is because he is conscious of the danger Medea poses to the state following the murder of Pelias (line 201): her plotting and historic craftiness lead him to question who she will spare or leave in peace (lines 181-2). He refers to her as ‘*vile ferocious fiend/monstrum saevum horribile*’ (line 191) and views her as a ‘*disease/luem*’ which needs removing before it infects his city, metaphorically illustrating the calamitous results of passions (lines 183-4). Even when he believes that he is being reasonable, Creon’s actions are arguably driven by passion, particularly fear of Medea. This raises the question of justice, fair trial, and the moral force of Creon’s decisions, all of which a ‘good’ king would consider important and practise because he exercises reason (cf. *Clem.* 1.12-3). Medea also reveals her view of regal

⁵³⁹ Cf. Abrahamsen (1999) p. 116.

⁵⁴⁰ Creon also refuses Medea asylum in Corinth or on any land he rules (*Med.* lines 269ff.) largely to prevent war with the Thessalian king, Acastus, who was seeking revenge against Jason and Medea for arranging the murder of his father, Pelias (lines 256ff. Cf. line 516).

responsibility to use his extensive resources to help the suffering, protect and not punish those seeking mercy, which she believes Creon fails to demonstrate towards her thus evidencing his failure as being a true king in the Stoic sense (lines 221-5).

Tyranny in *Thyestes*

An extension of the discussion of kingship in *De Clementia* is found in *Thyestes*, which depicts a tyrant's cruelty, rage and ruthlessness, providing compelling, though disturbing, entertainment.⁵⁴¹ The audience's first experience of Atreus is when he describes himself as an angry *tyrannus* (*Thy.* lines 177-80) which reinforces the connection between anger and tyranny which Seneca has established in other works. Atreus arrogantly believes that a ruler's power is by complete freedom of action, proposes autocratic monarchy and sees no position for virtues in royal life, suggesting that he places no value on virtue and reason (lines 214-8). He governs by brutality⁵⁴² and believes his subjects should defend his honour by waging war against his enemy (lines 180ff.). Despite warnings from the Satelles about the dangers of power established through terror (lines 207ff. Cf. *Clem.* 1.12.3-4), Atreus expects subjects' praise based on their fear, not their admiration or respect (lines 211ff. Cf. lines 205ff.) and this dread is confirmed by the Chorus (lines 561-72, 600). These are flaws in tyrants which Seneca repeats in his prose work⁵⁴³ and an argument which he rejects when proposed by the unnamed interlocutor (2.11.1).

While Davis (2003) recognises Atreus is not the 'ideal' king, he still makes a favourable comparison of Atreus with the Stoic Sage because he believes that the Stoic thinking about kingship in the play is 'inadequate to deal with these circumstances' (p. 66). In my view, however, there are no elements

⁵⁴¹ Cf. Littlewood (2004) pp. 29-30. Rose (1986-7) identifies that *rex* and *regnum* have three meanings in the play. For Atreus (in line with the late Republic and early Principate writers) *rex* refers to a tyrant: 'a leader who arrogates excessive and unlawful powers without respect for the rights and freedoms of his fellow citizens.' The second meaning is that of an enlightened ruler (as described by the Satelles in *Thy.* line 213. For the philosopher king of the Chorus see lines 344-403). The third meaning of *rex* relates to the criminal ambition for power which characterises this type of ruler (lines 336-403) (p. 119).

⁵⁴² Cf. *Thy.* lines 201-4; 288-9; 312ff.; *Clem.* 1.7.3, 1.12-13, 1.25.1-2.

⁵⁴³ Cf. *Clem.* 1.3.4ff., 1.10.2, 1.11.41, 1.12.3-4, 1.19.8.

of a Stoic Sage found in Atreus and any attempts to find these are the result of a grave misapplication of Stoicism. Davis connects Atreus with Stoicism because of his indifference towards the material aspect of kingship and focus on power itself (*Thy.* lines 211ff.) but in doing so, fails to acknowledge that, to a Stoic, the interest in power would be a dependence on externals as much as valuing objects and would therefore be unacceptable. Davis also notes that Atreus is unconcerned with his life and safety because he values it solely in terms of his capacity to take revenge on his brother (lines 190ff.). This interpretation overlooks the fact that a Stoic would acknowledge health and self-preservation as preferred indifferents, and while he would not pursue this over virtue itself, would see living as a means to acquire it and protect himself accordingly. Atreus may declare that he is unconcerned with his subjects' favour (lines 351ff.) because he does not value their judgements (lines 205-12) but these views are not the result of Stoic attitudes. While a Stoic does not depend on or define himself according to public perception, he is dedicated to perfecting his character because this facilitates consistent reason, he is aware that wise men recognise excellence of character (cf. Cic. *Tusc.* 3.3) and a *proficiens* looks to emulate men of such greatness (cf. *Ep.* 6.6-7; 11.8-10). Atreus demonstrates none of these motives for the way in which he thinks or views other people.

In addition, Davis is incorrect in assuming that because Atreus walks high among the stars (*Thy.* line 885) this equates with the Sage for whom everything is beneath him (line 366). Atreus' arrogance, for example that he is a God (lines 911-2), stems from beliefs that are based on his over-inflated self-worth (lines 205ff. Cf. lines 351ff.; *Clem.* 1.7; 1.8). These views are not those of a true ruler who should be god-like (*Clem.* 1.5.7), whereas the wise man is above the 'fool' because he has perfected reason, something which Atreus indisputably lacks. I dispute that because Atreus shows no fear when he kills his nephews this is the equivalent of a sage's constancy (lines 703ff.) despite the Chorus' perception of Atreus' consistency because he remained unmoved '*immotus Atreus consta*' (lines 703-4). I also reject the conclusion that because by the end of the play Atreus fears and desires nothing (since

he considers himself to have conquered his brother), this makes him a Stoic. That he still feels unsated, despite his apparent satisfaction at the start of Act Five (lines 888-91) is evidence that he remains confused about his actual status because of the complexity of thinking which has arisen from him being governed by anger: a problem from which a Sage is exempt. The Stoic Sage harms no one and fears nothing, not because he has 'removed' the problem through violent actions, but because he never allows external circumstances to impact on his well-being. In contrast to Davis, I regard Atreus as offering a distorted image of the Sage. In addition to his tyrannical rule, Atreus is not affected by other people's view of him as result of his arrogance not because externals do not form a part of his cultivation of virtue as is the case for a Stoic. Furthermore, his desire to manipulate his citizens to his will is exactly the opposite of the Stoic desire to cultivate a good community.

Successful tragedy requires audience engagement with the characters and their circumstances which is best facilitated by topics to which the audience can relate their personal experience, such as threats to familiarity and stability. Accordingly, *Thyestes* demonstrates the vulnerability of social and religious institutions, which are torn apart by the conduct of individuals and tyrants, who act out of anger and in doing so challenge the Roman virtues of 'courage/virtus' and 'duty/pietas'.⁵⁴⁴ The cannibalism in *Thyestes* inverts the institutions on which civilisation depends, by making a festive banquet which is usually a hospitable occasion to foster harmony, into something vile and torturous.⁵⁴⁵ Atreus' crimes attack traditional religious practices by confusing god, man and beast, as he sacrifices his nephews according to ritual (cf. *Thy.* lines 93ff., 684ff.).⁵⁴⁶ In many respects, this play is more of a 'training manual' against tyranny for Nero than *De Clementia*, in that it provides constant illustrations of the catastrophic consequences of unjust

⁵⁴⁴ Cf. Buckley (2013) p. 205. *Pietas* is often translated as 'duty', 'religious behaviour', 'loyalty' and 'devotion.' For Cicero it is: '*that which admonishes us to do our duty to our country or our parents or other blood relations — pietatem, quae erga patriam aut parentes aut alios sanguine coniunctos officium conservare moneat*' (Cic. *Inv. rhet.* 2.22.66, quoted by Wagenvoort (1980) p. 7). Cf. Boyle (2014) p. 199.

⁵⁴⁵ Cf. Boyle (1997) p. 47.

⁵⁴⁶ Cf. Boyle (1997) pp. 47-8.

and egotistical rule, one which is prompted by anger and obsession with taking violent vengeance.⁵⁴⁷ The play includes extensive discussions about alternatives which are more fitting to creating a harmonious state i.e. ruling without being influenced by passions such as *ira* which prevents fair judgements.

A true king

Despite the presentation of Atreus, or maybe because of it, Seneca can convince his audience to take a different view. *Thyestes* allows for the possibility of more humane leadership with Stoic-esque approaches to ruling proposed by the Chorus (*Thy.* lines 336-401). The Chorus discuss the appropriate governing qualities celebrated in *De Clementia*, such as justice, peace, security and honour all of which should be embodied in good living and possible through the absence of passions in decision-making (cf. *Clem.* 1.12.3-4, 1.19.8, 2.1.4).⁵⁴⁸ Their vision of kingship is diametrically opposed to the reality of Atreus' rule, reflecting contemporary Rome's experience of rulers, and their ideal has philosophical qualities. They explain that a true king is not made by extensive wealth, elaborate clothes and crowns or lavish decorations (lines 344-7). Rather, the ruler does not fear, scorns greed, does not seek popularity (lines 348-52) but becomes 'rich', not through his property and land, but through his excellent state of mind shown in his ability to 'weather the storm' metaphorically and literally (lines 353ff.). Most importantly, the good king courageously embraces death (lines 365-8), requires no military defences (lines 381ff.) and is free from *adfectus* in the sense that fear and desire are absent in him (lines 388-90). The Chorus conclude that they will leave ambition to others and seek a life of quiet contemplation and reflection, preparing to welcome death, all of which are key Stoic goals (lines 391-403).⁵⁴⁹

It is difficult to assess the extent to which Choruses put philosophical ideology into practice because they are characters of a different kind in that

⁵⁴⁷ Cf. Wilson (2014) pp. 158-62.

⁵⁴⁸ Cf. Schiesaro (2003) pp. 159-60.

⁵⁴⁹ Cf. 2.28.4, 3.42.1-43.1; *Beat.* 3.3; *Ep.* 63; 69.6; 77.18f.; *Helv.*; *Marc.* For preparation of death and *praemeditatio malorum*, see pp. 136-43.

their action is so restricted and their discussions are not always consistent with their loyalties: they appear Stoic only in their words and not in their actions.⁵⁵⁰ Nonetheless, their detachment and reflection here, which appears to reflect Stoic sentiments about how one should rule and contradicts the ideas and motivations of the main characters, provokes audience reflection to understand the relevance of their philosophical ideas to the plays' purposes and to someone with a Stoic inclination, leads him to think about the impact of passions. Thus, the Chorus educate the audience in the requirement to apply philosophy rather than to simply intellectualise it and serve as a reminder of the need to fully understand the doctrines, as opposed to just preaching them.

Externals

These plays emphasise the importance of correct selection/deselection by demonstrating how externals can be detrimental as this is where many of the tragic characters in *Medea* and *Thyestes* err.⁵⁵¹ Their desire for material possessions, power and public acknowledgement over the general welfare of other people has grave consequences as they lose family members, including their children. Seeing externals as being indifferent offers protection against materialistic trappings and from avarice and jealousy which regularly accompany multiple possessions, as is seen by Atreus' obsession with wealth and power in *Thyestes* and Creon's similar mistaken values in *Medea*. The dependency on other people and the belief that they can be controlled also causes problems within the plays.

Medea's dependence

Seneca argues the main cause of passions is false evaluations of external objects and situations. Creusa accentuates Medea's insecurities and highlights her isolation because her royal status appears to provide the power, influence, wealth and friends which as a foreigner she lacks and mistakenly values over reason: it is this error which is causing her distress.

⁵⁵⁰ Trinacty (2015) astutely observes that: 'The choral odes often applaud Stoic commonplaces, but these are usually revealed to be flimsy dreams in the dramatic context' (p. 36). This is particularly true of the Chorus' view of an ideal ruler in *Thyestes*.

⁵⁵¹ For the importance of rejecting externals pp. 157-9.

More significantly, Medea's love, grief and anger are the result of her assigning too high a value on her marriage to Jason. She has unrealistic expectations of Jason's reciprocity in terms of devotion to the extent that her feelings know no moderation (cf. *Med.* lines 207ff., 397-8, 671-2).⁵⁵² Medea's dependence on her marriage demonstrates how a dramatic world has different expectations of marital unions than society in the 'real' world.

For Jason, his new marriage was motivated by the need to secure his family's safety rather than romantic love. He never names Creusa and his only positive reference to her is through his suggestion that his sons would be better raised by: '*A great queen for needy sons of exile — Regina natis exulum, afflictis potens*' (line 509). Seen in this context, Jason's marriage would be accepted in the real world for the political and social advantages and mutual security.⁵⁵³ In Jason's case this would be to reinstate his Greek citizenship, status and wealth; for Creusa to secure the regal line. In a dramatic context, where feelings and responses are exaggerated, it opens the opportunity for strong passions such as jealousy, anger and rage to govern actions, with inevitably disastrous consequences. Medea is aware of Jason's devotion to his children – they are the reason he lives (lines 545ff.) – she decides to kill them because their deaths will cause him the greatest pain.⁵⁵⁴

In comparison, a Stoic would not idolise other people and would be cautious about the company he keeps. His concern for other people does not entail loving indiscriminately; nor does love demand romantic or sexual unions. This is because such relationships involve being taken over by passions, particularly anger, when expectations of other people are not met.

⁵⁵² Cf. Ohlander (1989) pp. 215-6.

⁵⁵³ Cf. Gloyn (2017) p. 77.

⁵⁵⁴ Jason's love of his sons is why he agrees to meet their mother (*Med.* line 444) and in response to Medea's request that he remembers the happy times of the marriage, he claims to forgive her (line 557). Jason rejects Medea's request for their children to join her in exile showing the importance of fatherly responsibility and the tradition in the ancient world for children to remain with their father and refuses to allow the boys to leave. After the death of his first child, Jason offers in vain to sacrifice himself to protect his second son (lines 1002-5).

Nonetheless, Stoicism promotes natural affection as one of the moral virtues which affirm an individual's connectedness to other people. The Sage feels affection towards young people whose appearance reveals a nature well-disposed to virtue (Diog. Laert. 7.129).⁵⁵⁵ He will marry and have children because he can form close relationships without being overwhelmed by passions.⁵⁵⁶ He acts according to *constantiae* and demonstrates good will, willing good for the other person's sake (cf. Zeno *Resp. apud* Diog. Laert. 7.121, 7.131).⁵⁵⁷

Thyestes' materialism

Thyestes is the most complicated case of Stoicism found in Senecan tragic characters. He first appears as shabbily dressed, presumably unshaven, a trait of ancient philosophers (*Thy.* lines 446ff. Cf. *Ep.* 48.7). His attitude towards exile is Stoic in the sense that he bears hardship with a positive attitude: like a Sage in troubled times, he was '*brave and happy/fortis... laetusque*' (lines 418).⁵⁵⁸ Thyestes professes the benefits of simple living and acknowledges the trappings of the throne in his argument against his son Tantalus, who is persuading him of the benefits of power (lines 423ff.). He reassures his son that a simple life is not to be feared – rather it is to be embraced as he has and living in such a way alleviates anxieties (lines 446ff. Cf. lines 453ff.). Thyestes' attitude reinforces how externals should not be depended upon because they can be lost as quickly as they can be gained, which is an important lesson in selection/deselection. He responds to his brother's suggestion that everyone would accept fortune's gifts by acknowledging the need for self-sufficiency and not rely on externals because they are transient (lines 536-7). There are occasions where Thyestes meets some of the requirements for a true king laid out by the

⁵⁵⁵ Diogenes Laertius reported discussion of these views by Zeno (*Resp.*), Chrysippus (*On Modes of Life*) and Apollodorus (*Ethics*) cf. Diog. Laert. 7.129.

⁵⁵⁶ Cf. Cic. *Fin.* 3.68; Cic. *Tusc.* 4.72; Stob. *Ecl.* 2.7.11m; Reydam-Schils (2005) pp. 55-9; Long (2013) p. 151.

⁵⁵⁷ Zeno's views about common wives in an ideal state (Diog. Laert. 7.33) were not picked up by later Stoics though the topic of marriage was often discussed by Stoics, such as by Cleanthes (Diog. Laert. 7.175); these texts do not survive. Cf. Schofield (1991) pp. 19-27; Reydam-Schils (2005) pp. 43-76; Vogt (2008) pp. 20-64; Gloyn (2017) p. 78. From a Stoic perspective, marriage was a 'duty that fits within a range of correct actions that the wise man should perform' (Gloyn (2017) p. 81).

⁵⁵⁸ Cf. *Ep.* 30.3; 54.3; *Prov.* 5.8; Rosivach (1995).

Chorus (lines 336-401), for example, he claims he is secure without weapons (line 468. Cf. lines 363ff.) and is indifferent to death (line 442. Cf. line 368). He recognises the transience of power, seeing no need to be swept away by the bright, but false, glory of regality (lines 414-5. Cf. *Ep.* 94.74). Here Thyestes has a realistic understanding of power.

While Thyestes begins the play holding Stoic-esque views, his attitude toward externals is not consistent. His son recognises a change in his father's attitude but assures him that Atreus will restore him to himself if Thyestes accepts the offer of joint kingship (*Thy.* line 433), suggesting he is not convinced by his father's declarations of satisfaction from simple living. Atreus is correctly confident that he will overcome his brother's resolution, because, while Thyestes' misfortunes and poverty have toughened his resistance, this is not sustainable (line 307). A true Stoic does not have attachments to externals, yet Thyestes proves that he is not as indifferent to wealth and power as he first appears. His first words refer to the wishes for the wealth of Argos (line 404), he alludes to former (ill-gotten) glories by his father's chariot (lines 409-10. Cf. lines 660ff.) and imagines the glory of being greeted by a crowd of citizens (line 411).⁵⁵⁹ He also expresses '*hope/optata*' at seeing his home (line 404), a feeling in which a Sage would not indulge. Later in the play, Thyestes is presented in an undignified fashion at the banquet, epitomising the degradation of luxurious living (lines 909-10). From his attitudes and his experiences of passions, it can be concluded that Thyestes is not a *sapiens* but a rambling pontificating inebriate, whose circumstances force Stoic-esque values.⁵⁶⁰ With great generosity, Thyestes could be viewed as a *proficiens*, though this is slightly

⁵⁵⁹ Cf. Davis (2003) pp. 46-7.

⁵⁶⁰ Davis (2003) notices that even when he talks about a life of poverty, Thyestes states that '*it is possible to prefer/praeferre licet*' bad to good fortune, not '*I prefer*' and that whereas Thyestes sees poverty as bad fortune, a Stoic would be indifferent to it (or may see it as good because he would be free from external trappings). In addition, Thyestes' regal life was excessively extravagant and when he says it is possible '*to manage/pati*' without a kingdom (*Thy.* line 470), he does not say he would want to. Thus, 'There is then a discrepancy between Thyestes' professed and his actual values. At an intellectual level, Thyestes holds values akin to those prescribed by Stoic philosophy. At a more visceral level, he holds the same values as other members of his family' (Davis (2003) p. 47). In this respect, Thyestes can be interpreted as struggling with a Stoic concept of preferred indifferents.

unrealistic because he shows minimal commitment to making permanent changes to his lifestyle and values. Instead, Seneca is presenting a character that misattributes philosophical ideas and misuses them for personal ends with disastrous consequences because passions have replaced reason.

Exile

In Senecan drama, the precarious nature of power (and the desperation to maintain it) is evidenced through the presentation of exile (both literal and metaphorical) of people who threaten the ruler who may punish in anger. Seneca incorporates this theme not only for dramatic effect, but also as a reflection of his personal experience and how responses to situations depend on whether a traditional or a Stoic perspective is adopted and how these attitudes affect personal circumstances. Seneca's experience undoubtedly influenced his plays and the dominance of exile emphasises contemporary concern for such a fate. In his consolation to his mother, Seneca argues that the common view of exile as being '*gloomy and accursed/triste et execrabile*' is incorrect (*Helv.* 5.6) and considers exile merely to be '*a change of place/loci commutatio*' (*Helv.* 6.1).⁵⁶¹ He believes that every place of exile has redeeming features (*Helv.* 6.4) and agrees with Marcus Brutus that a man can take his virtues into exile with him (*Helv.* 8.1-2. Cf. *Helv.* 11.5).⁵⁶² These views are shared by Stoics who accept their fate and do not see exile in terms of losses but a change in circumstances to which adaptation is required.⁵⁶³

Medea the foreigner

Exile has a psychological impact on those affected by it. People who are banished often mourn what they have lost (such as their home and loved ones) and are anxious and fearful about what their future location may bring. Exile in *Medea* is entirely negative, reflecting contemporary assumptions about foreigners being considered barbarians who should be mistrusted. In her first monologue, Medea reasonably prays that Jason becomes a

⁵⁶¹ Cf. Ker (2009b) pp. 97-105; Gunderson (2015) pp. 96-7.

⁵⁶² Cf. *Helv.*; Gloyn (2017) pp. 33-40.

⁵⁶³ Cf. Reydam-Schils (2005) pp. 103-13.

refugee, so he can suffer in the same way she has (*Med.* lines 19-26).⁵⁶⁴ She made many sacrifices for love and was exiled because of committing crimes for Jason.⁵⁶⁵ She portrays herself as an innocent victim, claiming Jason had robbed her of her family, homeland and deserted her overseas (lines 118-20).⁵⁶⁶ Apart from the support of her loyal Nurse and Jason's efforts to save her from death (Creon agrees to her exile in lines 185-6; 490-1), Medea is completely isolated and has nowhere to go (cf. lines 119-20; 207-10) which is confirmed by the Nurse's reference to her faithless husband (lines 164-5). She cannot reclaim her dowry (lines 487-9) and without resources, she raises further suspicion, with the perception of her as a barbarian making prospects for a new home difficult.⁵⁶⁷

Medea's concerns would be legitimate in a real social context because for Romans at the time of Seneca's writing, Augustan marriage laws remained applicable: for instance, women were penalised for not remarrying within a set time.⁵⁶⁸ In addition, at a time where adultery was a public crime and morality a state concern, Jason's perceived unfaithfulness would have been punished with banishment and the confiscation of property and within this context, Medea's anger with her husband might perhaps be socially acceptable. In the dramatic context, however, her exaggerated response surpasses what is socially tolerable and would not be accepted as appropriate for Stoics. The characters' counterreaction could be met by greater audience sympathy for Jason as revealed by the Chorus' loyalty to him (cf. *Med.* lines 56-115, 595-6, 668-9). The fact that men too were expected to marry for procreation purposes in accordance with social expectations and because it was natural to do so may also account for the acceptance of Jason's remarriage (Gell. *NA* 1.6.2).

⁵⁶⁴ Cf. Wilson (2014) pp. 96-9.

⁵⁶⁵ Cf. *Med.* lines 129ff., 134-6, 207ff., 451ff., 458; 483ff.

⁵⁶⁶ Cf. Benton (2003) p. 273.

⁵⁶⁷ Cf. Cic. *Top.* 23; Benton (2003) p. 274.

⁵⁶⁸ The *Lex Iulia de maritandis ordinibus* (18BC) decreed widows were to be remarried within ten months and divorcees within six to avoid penalties. From 9AD, the *Lex Papia Poppaea* revised the timescale to two years and eighteen months accordingly. Cf. Gloy (2017) pp. 77, 138 n. 14.

On a practical level, Jason's abandonment has disturbing consequences for Medea: she has lost her identity as her divorce removes her status as a mother and wife, roles which socially defined women.⁵⁶⁹ Jason is Medea's sole social contact and his departure marks the end of the tie with human society.⁵⁷⁰ She is hated, feared and unwanted by the Chorus who mock and desire to silence her by significantly not mentioning her name in an attempt to diminish her power (*Med.* line 114).⁵⁷¹ She justifiably feels threatened and is conscious of the need for self-protection. Medea's isolation is communicated through a series of dramatic devices, such as her constant presence on stage (often alone) and her identity monopolises the play in the minds of others and herself – she speaks over half the lines and the tragedy takes her name, marking the irony of other people's attempt to quieten a woman whose words dominate the play.⁵⁷²

Seneca highlights her 'otherness' by presenting Medea as ungovernable by reason or custom, while other characters, such as the Chorus, behave in a respectable, obedient and conventional fashion. The Chorus support Jason and present him as an innocent victim who ought to be aware of Medea's capabilities which reinforces Medea's isolation (*Med.* lines 102-4). They represent civilisation and order in the play, as demonstrated by their loyalty to the royal family and their following of traditions such as their *epithalamium* in celebration of Jason and Creusa's wedding (lines 56-115). The Chorus describe Jason to be trembling and unwilling at the proposition of marrying Medea (lines 102-4) which could suggest that they did not believe their wedlock was legitimate: to be so, consent and will to marry was expected (Quint. *Inst.* 5.2.32). Instead, they encourage marrying Creusa because it

⁵⁶⁹ Cf. Curley (1986) pp. 195-9; Guastella (2001) pp. 199-200; Chapter Five *passim*.

⁵⁷⁰ Fyfe (1983) emphasises the problems that Jason's rejection of Medea causes. She argues that Jason's departure leaves Medea in a 'moral vacuum, an existential void' (p. 82) and that his absence means that Medea is alone: 'with no human contact around which a moral framework may be rebuilt' (p. 85). This is another reason why Jason can be held accountable in part for Medea's behaviour.

⁵⁷¹ The characters appear frustrated by their inability to silence Medea (cf. *Med.* Chorus in lines 114-5; Nurse in lines 150ff.; Creon in lines 188ff. and Jason in line 530) and her refusal to calm down and listen to reason (cf. Nurse lines 150-4, 157-8, 381, 425-6; Jason lines 506-7, 537-9, 557-9).

⁵⁷² Boyle (2014) notes that: 'Seneca's Medea is a brilliant rhetorician, whose control of the play's language will mirror her mastery of its action' (p. 196).

had her father's blessing (lines 105-6), implying the presence of Roman legal requirements in the marriage.⁵⁷³ The princess' Greek citizenship will provide Jason with status and wealth (even though he is foreign to Corinth which furthers the irony of the union (line 115)) and will produce legitimate children which was an important motivation in the institution of marriage in the ancient world. This highlights the differences between perceptions about civilisation and foreignness which are continued by the dramatic irony that the Chorus (representing civilisation) appeal to the same gods as Medea (the barbarian), reflecting a battle between good (reason) versus evil (irrationality).⁵⁷⁴

Facing exile in *Thyestes*

Banishment and its effect on an individual's mental state are equally significant in *Thyestes*. At the opening of the play, Thyestes returns from exile (which was enforced by his angry brother following their struggle for power) in an unkempt fashion but initially praises the benefits of simple living (cf. *Thy.* lines 412ff.; 446-52), largely because of his fear when he was in power (lines 447-9). Here a Senecan character is found expressing a more positive view of exile which could alleviate fears about relocation, making a life away from hectic public life and its obligations an endearing alternative because it facilitates focusing on self-improvement and philosophical reflections. Thyestes describes how it is harder to fall from high status and riches than poverty itself, he is proud of his adjustment to changed circumstances (cf. lines 926ff.) and that he was able to '*hold his head high/non inflexa//cervice*' (line 931). This is how a Stoic would respond and by showing Thyestes in a positive light, Seneca is encouraging his audience to emulate this aspect of his attitude towards acceptance, adaptation and rejecting externals. However, Thyestes is greedy and egocentric expecting a grand welcoming on his return (line 411), devoid of consideration for the events prior to his departure and their impact on his former subjects.

⁵⁷³ Cf. Treggiari (1991) pp. 37-80; Abrahamsen (1999) pp. 108-9; Cantarella (2002); Boyle (2014) pp. 148-9.

⁵⁷⁴ Berry (1996) aptly notes that: 'The person of Medea is more than a *metaphor* for evil or cruelty... She is, because she is barbarian, a human window on man's mordant, animal past' (p. 12). Cf. Lawall (1979).

Furthermore, as the play progresses, Thyestes serves as an example of debauched luxurious living rather than an example to follow and in this way, he reinforces the appropriateness of a simple life. Once dining in the palace, while rallying himself to be happy, Thyestes rejects wholesome simple living and now considers banishment and poverty the result of ill-fortune (*Thy.* lines 920ff.), causing shame (lines 924-5), which is a more common view of exile. Though it is little discussed, it is reasonable to assume that Atreus' exile following usurpation prior to the play is a negative experience. Atreus complains about his fear when he was wandering (lines 237-8), laments over '*gloomy poverty/tristis egestas*' (line 303) which echoes when Thyestes alludes to the shame of being poor (line 924). This explains Atreus' desire to maintain his control and punish those who threaten his power which is unfortunately (but possibly understandably for the genre) violent.

Death and suicide

Stoicism, like other ancient philosophies, recognises that dying is a cause of common fear in mankind and tries to offer reassurance.⁵⁷⁵ However, in *Medea* and *Thyestes*, Seneca introduces ghosts who manipulate the action because they are victim to human passions, particularly anger and desire for revenge, for example, Tantalus takes responsibility for governing Atreus' action (*Thy.* lines 1-121). As well as desires for the death of other people and carrying this out, there are death wishes for the self among tragic characters. Medea expresses a wish and acceptance of death twice in the play, firstly in her bravery against Creon (*Med.* line 170) and again later when she is seeking justice from Jupiter for her and Jason's crimes (lines

⁵⁷⁵ Within Stoicism, there is debate about what happens to the soul after death. As the soul was material, some Stoics argue that it died with the body; others believe that the *anima* and divine element meant that it survived with the heavenly bodies (cf. Cic. *Tusc.* 1.18). Cleanthes believed souls survived until conflagration (Diog. Laert 7.157), whereas Chrysippus believed only the Sage's soul survived: for the rest of men, the souls existed temporarily before being destroyed or reabsorbed into the cosmic *pneuma* and animals' souls were destroyed with their body cf. Motto (1955a) pp. 188-9. Seneca offers conflicting views. At times, he claims that '*death is non-existence/mors est non esse*' (*Ep.* 54.4-5). Elsewhere he proposes that death is an eternal existence (*Ep.* 102.29). On occasion, he considers that death may be a return to God (cf. *Ep.* 36.10; 93.10) and discusses the possibility that souls are happier when they are released from the body (*Ep.* 76.25). His ambiguity is pronounced when he admits that he is unsure if the soul at death moves to a better life and dwells with the deity or returns to the universe (*Ep.* 71.16). Cf. Gould (1965) pp. 22-3; Scott Smith (2014) pp. 357-60.

531ff.).⁵⁷⁶ She appears to adopt a Stoic attitude, considering death to be the only way for freedom from suffering when she states that a shameful life should not be endured (line 505). Although Medea does not consistently express Stoic views, her attitude towards death may be considered that of a Stoic heroine, akin to a Sage and a true king who '*gladly/libens*' meets death (*Thy.* lines 367-8) and in whom there is an absence of fear even at the point of dying (cf. *Ep.* 61; 82).⁵⁷⁷ These attitudes provide a further opportunity for Seneca to communicate Stoic attitudes towards states of mind. He presents suicide in his prose works as '*freedom/libertas*', claiming that it is better to die well than risk the dangers of living badly (*Ep.* 70.6).⁵⁷⁸

Death alone tests true Stoicism as it is a test of character (cf. *Ep.* 26.5; 30.8).⁵⁷⁹ Seneca demonstrated this in his own life when in 65AD, charged with alleged involvement in Piso's conspiracy to kill Nero, he was sentenced to commit suicide.⁵⁸⁰ His noble attitude in the face of death is hailed by his followers as being comparable to Socrates', with both being given hemlock (cf. *Tac. Ann.* 15.60-4). Seneca acclaims individuals who faced death bravely for example Bassus (*Ep.* 30.9) and Cato (*Ep.* 24.6-7), in order to persuade his reader that these examples should be emulated and to reassure him that death should not be feared (*Ep.* 24.11) and that it is the '*best invention of nature/optimum inventum naturae*' because of the freedom it provides (*Ep.* 20.1). However, Seneca insists that desiring to die is not appropriate and such lust for death, a common weakness in man, must be avoided (*Ep.* 24.24-5). Thus, he would not tolerate Medea's yearning nor Jason's offer of himself as a substitute to their son's death (*Med.* line 1005) nor Thyestes' wish to end his life after consuming his

⁵⁷⁶ The Nurse warns of the king's power and his armies, advising Medea to escape, but Medea issues a reminder that she is from royal stock, is not afraid and refuses to run (*Med.* line 169). However, Medea's absence of fear of Creon is not because she believes his behaviour cannot affect her flourishing in the Stoic sense, but because she arrogantly over-values herself and for this reason believes she is invincible.

⁵⁷⁷ Cf. Boyle (2014) p. 173.

⁵⁷⁸ Cf. *Ep.* 12.10; 22.5; 26.10; 58.32-4; 66.13; 70.14-16, 24ff.; 77; 78.2; *Prov.* 6.7; *Cic. Fin.* 3.60-1; *Diog. Laert.* 7.130; Ker (2009b) pp. 247ff.

⁵⁷⁹ Cf. Veyne (2003) pp. 112-4; Tarrant (2006) pp. 16-7; Olberding (2008) p. 138; Romm (2014) p. 152.

⁵⁸⁰ Cf. Ker (2009b) pp. 17ff.; Romm (2014) pp. 190-4; Wilson (2014) pp. 205-12.

children (*Thy.* lines 1043ff.) as acceptable outcomes. This is because the characters' decision to die originates from passion not a rational decision, which a '*brave/fortis*' and '*wise man/sapiens*' would make (cf. *Ep.* 24.25ff.).

Man's agency

Fate

Following on from the theme of death, it is appropriate to consider how the characters' perceptions of fate's role in propelling events demonstrate the mental struggle due to their lack of a proper understanding of nature which would enable tolerance of ever-changing circumstances. The absence of a Stoic view can induce anxiety about what might happen in the future and for those who are unable to foresee where fate will lead, anger can arise. This response often results in feelings of life being fatalistic rather than understanding the extent of the human sphere of control and consequent accountability for circumstances.⁵⁸¹

Fate's role in the action of *Medea*

Medea accepts some responsibility for her actions, for instance, when she confesses her guilt to Creon (*Med.* line 246. Cf. lines 279-80). Determined not to be governed by external affairs or surrender her autonomy, she recognises the violence, fickleness and speed of fortune (lines 219-20) and that fate can remove wealth but not her spirit (line 176. Cf. *Ep.* 36.6; 66.44). She goes as far as to claim to be above fortune (line 520) as a Sage does.⁵⁸² She implies that she is fearless of fate and subverts the traditional idea that fortune favours the brave (line 159), reinforcing the argument that fear of fortune is groundless (cf. *Ep.* 13.1ff.; 18.6ff.; 98). The difference is that Medea believes that she has power over fortune and yet she is unable to adjust to changes, showing her inconsistency and self-denial, whereas the Sage accepts the outcome graciously and because he has made correct decisions: he is not victim to misfortunes in the same way as a fool.

⁵⁸¹ Cf. *Thy.* lines 33-6, 536-7, 615ff., 938ff.; 3.6.5.

⁵⁸² Cf. *Beat.* 5.3; *Ben.* 7.3.2; *Constant.* 5.6ff.; *Ep.* 71.30; 84.13; 85.38; Littlewood (2004) p. 39. For ancient concepts of *fortuna*, see Boyle (2014) pp.188-9.

Fate in *Thyestes*

In addition to the questions raised by the opening of the play about Seneca's commitment to presenting Stoicism in his tragedies, there are elements of *Thyestes* which could be considered to reflect Stoic ideas about fate. The Fury acknowledges the unpredictability of fate and how man is victim to its whims (*Thy.* lines 32-6). In a moment of temporary clarity during the banquet, Thyestes makes some comments about the unreliability of fate which, while being common-sense, can also be seen to reflect the workings of the universe according to Stoic theory, even though, within the play, he may not be aware of the philosophical implications of his thinking (lines 938-41). The Chorus also adopt a Stoic stance to the cycle of life of constant change (lines 596-7) and warn against complacency in times of good fortune (lines 615-22), indirectly supporting a Stoic view of not attaching value to externals. For Thyestes, pleasure is confused with '*dolor/pain*' (lines 968-9) and the transience of this *adfectus* is accurately identified by the Chorus in their comments on how situations are not lasting: pleasure and pain vacillate with the former being briefer (lines 596-7). The Chorus' concerns reflect the Stoic theory of '*conflagration/ekpyrôsis*', where floods or fire destroy the universe periodically to allow for a new cycle (cf. lines 812ff.; 829ff.).⁵⁸³ They fear for mankind (lines 875ff.) but conclude by accepting death, which is typical of Stoicism (lines 881-3).⁵⁸⁴

God and the gods

Combined with the interest in fate in Senecan drama is the consideration of divinities, in particular questions about the existence of gods, their relevance if they do not reward virtue and punish evil, the role of human agency, the creation of *adfectus* and their consequences. These subjects all emphasise the need for men to take responsibility for their thoughts and actions, instead

⁵⁸³ Cf. *Ep.* 7.8; 9.16; 14.10; 71.13-4; 91.13; *Marc.* 21.2, 26.6; *Poly.* 1.2; *QNat.* 3.13.1-2, 3.27, 3.28.7, 3.29.9, 3.30; *Cic. Nat. D.* 2.118; *Diog. Laert.* 7.134; *Philo Aet.* 90 (*SVF* 1.511 part); *Plut. Comm. not.* 1075D (*SVF* 1.510); Littlewood (2004) pp. 18-20. In *Ep.* 9.16 Jupiter withdraws during the dissolution of the world and the Sage does the same. Cf. Berry (1996) p. 6; Belliotti (2009) p. 185. During this period of contemplation, the individual assesses his lot and tries to establish or re-establish his sense of self, which he will assert to others when it is formed/revised.

⁵⁸⁴ In response to the Nurse's attempts to placate her, Medea responds by claiming that calm will come when the world has died with her (*Med.* lines 426-8) which is illustrated by the fire in Corinth that is fuelled by water (lines 879ff.).

of being driven by irrational forces.⁵⁸⁵ Gods' roles in *Medea* and *Thyestes* are confusing. This is largely because the desperation of the characters leads them to appeal to the Olympian gods through prayers and sacrifice to acknowledge the gods' power and existence in fear that the divinities would display anger if they were ignored.⁵⁸⁶ This traditional concept of gods offered no coherent reasons for behaving in a moral fashion: action was motivated by desire for protection from divine wrath. An alternative Stoic stance considers the traditional Greek gods as elements of their single divinity who was called by different names according to his various powers and Zeno unifies the attributes of God to declare him '*the whole world and heaven*' (Diog. Laert. 7.148).⁵⁸⁷

Seneca is proposing a revision of religious priorities and beliefs to emphasise accountability, believing in the benefits from guidance about how best to conduct oneself, and Stoicism seems an appropriate source of support. Instead of the Olympian gods, a different divinity exists, one that is identical with reason, that does not intervene directly in human lives (other than to reside within), who should be honoured, not through prayers and sacrifices, but by protecting the innate divine element through perfecting reason (cf. *Ep.* 41.1). He attempts this at the same time as remaining true to dramatic tradition which follows the practice of his predecessors to address the myths about divinities proposed by poets.⁵⁸⁸ Seneca's attempts were ambitious: their reception and success are unclear due to the lack of ancient reference to Seneca's playwriting. Nonetheless they ought to be acknowledged as a noble effort at reformation of attitudes.

Medea's divinities

Gods are found in their positive and negative forms in *Medea* and structure the play with the first word being '*di/gods*' and the last '*deos/gods.*' *Medea*

⁵⁸⁵ Cf. Slavitt (1992) pp. viii-ix.

⁵⁸⁶ Cf. Davis (1993) p. 184.

⁵⁸⁷ Diogenes Laertius cites the names of Dia, Zeus, Athena, Hera, Hephaestus, Poseidon and Demeter to define God's power as the cause of life, the ruler of the elements, sea and earth (Diog. Laert. 7.147). Cf. Sandbach (1975) p. 12; Sharples (1996) p. 48.

⁵⁸⁸ Cf. Cic. *Nat. D.* 2.24.63, 3.24.62-4.

invokes the gods of marriage (including Jupiter, Juno, Hymenaeus, Lucina) and those of the Underworld to avenge Jason's pending marriage to Creusa because betrayal of love has motivated her revenge (*Med.* lines 1-36). Medea also appeals to the divinities involved in punishing the Argonauts (such as Jupiter lines 2-3). In anger, she asks the Furies to curse the Corinthian royal family, to exile Jason and avenge the murdered Absyrtus (lines 13-26. Cf. lines 958ff. Similarly, Atreus calls on the Furies for assistance (*Thy.* lines 250ff.)). The Furies are an appropriate source for assistance because they were present at Medea's wedding. She also seeks support from her grandfather the Sun god, Sol, for his chariot to destroy Corinth with fire (*Med.* lines 26ff.). However, Medea's appeal is unconventional because Roman rituals were carried out with '*well-omened words/fauete linguis*' and spectator silence, whereas she prays with inauspicious words (line 12).⁵⁸⁹

The Chorus in *Medea* appeal to the gods on several occasions. Initially, through the *epithalamium* and sacrificial offerings they request the royal marriage is blessed (*Med.* lines 56-115). Later they request protection from Medea's unruly passions as they fear that she will cause violent destruction wherever she goes (lines 866ff.). This illustrates the problem of reliance on the gods to intervene in mortal life to resolve human problems and shows the misunderstanding of man's sphere of influence. Such dependence leads to confusion as to whether 'dutiful' behaviour will be acknowledged in the way it is hoped. The gods in Seneca's *Medea* ignore the requests of the 'civilised' citizens of the Chorus, possibly because of the challenge made to natural order by the Argonaut voyage, which would anger the Olympian gods if they felt their power was being threatened. Within the play, there may be other reasons for these gods' resistance to supporting the Corinthians. While the Chorus recognise the penalties suffered by the Argonauts may have been deserved for disrupting natural order, they can be perceived to have offended the gods by criticising the punishment when they are trying to protect Jason from divine retribution following the Argonaut

⁵⁸⁹ Cf. Hine (1989) pp. 414-5 and (2000) p. 114.

expedition (cf. lines 595-6; 668-9). A more evident offence, even though it is a traditional part of the wedding song, is the Chorus' declaration that the wedding couple are more beautiful than the gods (cf. lines 75ff., 82ff., 93-8).⁵⁹⁰ To the Olympian gods, this would be considered pride and defiance (*hubris*), punishable potentially with death. As it is these gods to whom they are appealing, it is unsurprising that the gods do not answer the Chorus' prayers.

The irony of appealing to the same marriage gods in Medea's initial soliloquy and the Choral *epithalamium* recurs when the Chorus pray to Phoebus to drive his chariot on to end the day (*Med.* lines 874-5). Sol provides one for Medea to depart (lines 1022ff.) showing the divinities' loyalty, not to the ordinary man, but to Medea as she had requested in the prologue (lines 32-6). Medea has been interpreted as acting as Neptune's agent to punish Jason for his role in the sailing expedition.⁵⁹¹ She is convinced Hecate is present during her incantations (lines 740-842) and requests that Creusa's gifts are poisoned and have fire concealed in them (lines 817-39). This prayer seems to be answered when the poison is prepared (lines 840-3) and Corinth is destroyed by flames (lines 879-80).⁵⁹²

Knowing that a Stoic sees God as a rational agent, are Medea's atrocities supposed to be accepted as part of divine order? Surely Seneca's Stoic sympathies would prevent him from wanting his audience to accept the alternative, which would confirm Jason's belief at the end of the play that there are no gods? Jason's conclusion is reached because Medea's triumph is incompatible with the divine order in which he believes, because there is no direct punishment for her actions, which would be expected from the old

⁵⁹⁰ Cf. Hine (1989) pp. 416-9.

⁵⁹¹ Cf. Pratt (1983) p. 87. Mythological evidence may explain the gods' loyalty to Medea: Corinth was founded by Corinthos, a descendent of the Sun God Sol. According to Pausanias, there was a debate between Poseidon/Neptune and Helios/Sol over the ownership of Corinth. The mediator, Briareus, concluded the Isthmus of Corinth belonged to Poseidon and the Acropolis to Helios (Paus. 2.1.5ff.). Cf. Ohlander (1989) pp. 19-30.

⁵⁹² Medea may be imagining the goddess in the same way she hallucinates her brother's ghost and the Furies (*Med.* lines 958-71) but the reference to trembling cauldrons was an indication to ancient men that a god was present (line 785). Cf. Boyle (2014) pp. 326-7.

order of Olympian divinities.⁵⁹³ Or maybe he means that there are no gods where she goes (*Med.* line 1027)? This is mistaken, as Medea departs on Sol's chariot into the sky suggesting her change into a divinity (line 1025). Medea's exit further confuses the portrayal of divinities, contradicts everything Stoics believe and suggests evil is rewarded, which cannot be accepted in a world governed by reason. In the non-dramatic world, there may be no gods of the Olympian order who reward and punish capriciously and to whom Jason refers (although they exist in *Medea* because the notion of divine punishment permeates the play). But a God synonymous with reason must exist for Stoicism to be viable. This God does not appear in Seneca's tragedies, but his absence is poignant. It prompts consideration of alternative religious stances to the archaic Olympians showing that there are no gods in the sense the characters believe and that the world of *Medea* really is a dramatic construct.

Absent gods in *Thyestes*

Thyestes presents gods in a complex manner as there is confusion over the responsibility for the bizarre events which occur within the play. The characters hold different views about the existence of gods. The Chorus and Thyestes appeal to the Olympian deities for assistance out of desperation and fear, despite the fact the gods have fled (*Thy.* line 1021).⁵⁹⁴ The absence of heavenly divinities in the play is highlighted by the pervading presence of the Fury and references to the Underworld gods.⁵⁹⁵ When the Chorus request assistance to end the cycle of crime, they do not address a particular deity other than asking *if* any god loves Argos (lines 122ff.). They hold traditional views about the gods as anthropomorphic beings that experience the whims and passions of men as they are portrayed in Homer and are convinced that divine inspiration is involved in the brothers' reconciliation even though they are unsure which of the gods has helped

⁵⁹³ Before he appeals to the gods, Jason doubts their existence, but his desperation prompts an appeal nonetheless (*Med.* lines 439-40).

⁵⁹⁴ Cf. *Thy.* lines 407; 776ff., 789ff., 842-3, 892ff., 1069ff.

⁵⁹⁵ Shelton (1975) argues that: 'Seneca used the Hercules and Thyestes myths to show that men, not gods, are responsible for human misfortunes because they allow themselves to be controlled by irrational passions' (p. 266). This is a way in which Seneca uses his plays to communicate philosophical ideas to persuade his audience of truths about the world.

(lines 560-1). They believe Jupiter has authority over rulers (lines 607ff.) but they do not have a sufficiently satisfactory comprehension of how the world works to be taken seriously in their views, particularly as their opinions are shaped by the *adfectus*, fear. This compounds the dramatic irony of their interpretation of the event.

On his arrival in Argos, Thyestes questions the presence of gods (*Thy.* lines 406-7) which may explain his attitudes and behaviour.⁵⁹⁶ He will not pray for a saviour but believes in '*divine vengeance/vindices aderunt dei*' (line 1110). He requests that the state of darkness continues and with it further chaos and destruction (lines 1077ff.). Nevertheless, Thyestes places his trust in the Earth and the rivers of the underworld and surrenders responsibility to them to punish Atreus (lines 1007ff.). He may think that Atreus' crime is too great for him or any human to punish or be challenging Atreus' belief that the brothers have the same capacity for vengeance.⁵⁹⁷ Poe's proposal that Thyestes has greater power than his brother is highly inaccurate.⁵⁹⁸ Thyestes appeals to the (absent) gods to punish Atreus suggesting he does not have the power to inflict appropriate revenge unaided, which explains why the punishment never occurs and the cycle of violence continues after the play. This could be regarded as alluding to how anger is ill-suited to punishment and consequently does not provide permanent resolution to conflict.

Atreus acts when there are no divine witnesses ('*dum caelum vacat*', *Thy.* line 892) and soon dismisses the gods above from their duties as he has carried them out himself: '*dimitto superos*' (line 888). Yet he meticulously

⁵⁹⁶ Tarrant (1985) believes that: 'In Stoic terms Thyestes' lack of faith could be linked to his failure to abide by his principles' (p. 149) cf. *Ep.* 73.16. Curley (1986) notes that Thyestes' impiety and not saluting the local gods on his return is a 'violation of this norm' in ancient theatre (pp. 147-8). This is an example of where Seneca deviates from dramatic custom and is an illustration of his originality as a dramatist.

⁵⁹⁷ The Chorus indicate that either brother could be responsible for the children's murder ('*non quaero quis sit, sed uter*', *Thy.* lines 640) and Atreus believes it to be worthy ('*dignum*') of them both which is why they should perform it together ('*uterque faciat*') (lines 271-2). While Seneca opens the opportunity to consider that both brothers have potential for violence, it is Atreus who realises and manipulates Thyestes' involvement. Cf. Curley (1986) pp. 141ff.

⁵⁹⁸ Cf. Poe (1969) p. 376.

prepares the killing of his nephews as one would in a sacrificial ritual (cf. lines 545, 685-706), in the same way as Medea's murders are sacrificial offerings (*Med.* line 970).⁵⁹⁹ This is inconsistent with Atreus' claims of divine status (*Thy.* lines 885-6) and the Stoic belief that God is wholly reasonable and does not suffer passions, proving that he is not a god. However, his claim demonstrates the irony of deluded importance in rulers who are governed by passions. These challenges to the traditional religious belief of the gods' influence are disruptive, particularly when humans replace animal sacrifices and gods are absent or dragged from the stars only to be replaced by men in the play. The gods' absence in *Thyestes* could be because Seneca does not believe that gods exist in this form and he is trying to persuade his audience that this is the case, rather than the result of the play's events.

Nature and its forces in *Medea* and *Thyestes*

The plays present individuals and the universe in ways which run counter to a Stoic belief that nature is wholly rational, passions are a perversion of nature and nature provides everything man needs to live well. Strong feelings are communicated through carefully selected language, such as metaphors from natural phenomena to indicate the power and destructiveness of *adfectus*.

Forces of nature in *Medea*

In *Medea*, the sea is both a powerful force disrupted by sailing and a punitive element avenging the Argo sailors for disturbing the calm sea (*Med.* lines 579ff.). The Chorus communicate the problems of challenging nature, without perhaps understanding the need for *secundum naturam*, by citing the problems which arose from human daring (cf. lines 301ff., 363),⁶⁰⁰ challenging nature through travel (lines 603-6) by trying to control it and imposing man's law on the sea (cf. *QNat.* 5.18.9-10). The Chorus recount

⁵⁹⁹ Cf. *Med.* lines 37ff., 905, 967-71, 976, 1005, 1019-22.

⁶⁰⁰ Bishop (1965) argues the use of '*audacia*' leads to punishment, for example, Phaethon who was destroyed by the Sun for violating him (*Med.* line 597). This echoes Jason's destruction by Sol's descendant, Medea (pp. 314-5). Cf. Ohlander (1989) p. 231; Berry (1996) p. 16; Romm (2014) pp. 34-6.

how greed destroyed the purity of the Golden Age which respected nature and valued virtue over material acquisitions in a manner akin to Stoic views (lines 329ff.). The creation of a new world order dominated by materialism and vice (lines 364ff.) breaks down previous boundaries prescribed by nature (lines 374ff.).⁶⁰¹ In principle, a Stoic may support travel when it occurs for the right reasons, as this brings people closer to a community of gods and men (lines 375-9). In reality, desire for expansion, motivated by passions, is often the cause of travel, prompted by lust for power and greed (and in some rulers' opinion to create stability), which a Stoic would condemn because of the risk of social and moral degradation as can be seen in *Medea*.⁶⁰² Journeying is an important motif in *Medea*, both literally in providing the background to the play and symbolically for the self-improvement Seneca seeks to evoke in his audience.⁶⁰³

Medea's indulgence in witchcraft (through which she is inviting the irrational and unnatural into her world) is evidenced by her incantations (*Med.* lines 680ff.) to which the '*world shivers/mundus... tremit*' in response (line 739) and, prior to the play, her rejuvenation of Aeson and the bewitching of the dragon who guarded the Golden Fleece.⁶⁰⁴ The Nurse refers to Medea as '*This artist of crime/haec scelerum artifex*' (line 734) and reports that she is alone preparing murderous herbal concoctions (lines 670ff.), while evoking the gods of the Underworld (lines 9ff. Cf. lines 740ff.).⁶⁰⁵ A dramatic world of chaotic challenges to natural order is central to tragedy. For example, Medea uses the enduring order of nature as a guarantee of her hatred (lines 401-7) and declares that she will only rest when she and the universe are destroyed together (lines 426-8). The audience could become unsettled in anticipation of witnessing the impossible becoming a reality because Medea

⁶⁰¹ Cf. Bishop (1965) p. 313; Nussbaum (1994) pp. 464-71.

⁶⁰² Cf. Berry (1996) p. 15; Benton (2003) p. 284. Boyle (2014) argues that Medea's use of herbs from the Far East for her spells is an example of the dangers of travel (p.309).

⁶⁰³ For the travelling metaphor communicating the *proficiens'* voyage towards reason cf. *Beat.* 1.1-3; *Brev.* 9.5; *Ep.* 44.7; 99.7; 102.24; 107.2; *Poly.* 11.2.

⁶⁰⁴ Cf. Henry and Henry (1985) pp. 31-5.

⁶⁰⁵ Hine (2000) recognises that through her spells, Medea is breaking the 5thBC Roman law code of the Twelve Tables, which prohibited chanting to harm neighbours' crops, showing that she transgresses all institutional demands (p. 176). This confirms Medea's otherness and her challenge to convention.

asserts she will snatch daylight from heaven (lines 28). She boasts that her anger surpasses all mythical characters, citing sea monsters Scylla and Charybdis as examples (lines 407ff.) and the Chorus claim her to be a greater evil than the sea (line 362). Medea states that fierce waters could not calm or rival her, and she has obtained power to reverse natural order.⁶⁰⁶ This challenge to nature is reflected in the inversion of social stereotypes with a woman causing lamentation rather than displaying it.

The creation (and disruption) of order as a result of reason (or lack of it) in Seneca's tragedies is plagued with dramatic irony and creates tension. References to forces of nature are also used by characters to communicate Medea's mental state. The Nurse describes Medea's confusion through a wave image (*'exundat furor'*, *Med.* line 392), suggesting supernatural powers at the same time as acknowledging her mistress's vulnerability to powerful passions. Medea describes her emotional turmoil through sea and wind metaphors to show the unpredictability and power of *adfectus* and how she is dragged in different directions (lines 937ff.). Her actions are underpinned by the desire to set things in order: she believes that her power and authority are restored when vengeance is planned (lines 982-4). She departs with the comment: *'Good it's done — bene est, peractum est'* (line 1019) suggesting that she is satisfied with her actions and there is no expectation of retaliation. This compares with earlier times in the play when she is assessing whether the punishment is enough (cf. lines 896ff., 954ff., 1009-13).⁶⁰⁷ However, no challenge to nature will be successful. Being driven by *adfectus* leads to disintegration of the rational self because passions are contrary to reason. This fragmentation is particularly ironic for Seneca's protagonists, who were especially concerned with their identity for personal and public affirmation.⁶⁰⁸

Unnatural occurrences in *Thyestes*

⁶⁰⁶ Cf. *Med.* lines 411-4, 424, 673-5, 739, 755ff., 887-90.

⁶⁰⁷ Cf. Boyle (2014) p. 158.

⁶⁰⁸ Cf. Henry and Henry (1985) p. 113. For the protagonists' loss of identity, see pp. 224-9.

Similar disruption of natural order because of anger occurs in *Thyestes*, with the bestial nature of the characters, the cannibalism and perpetual darkness. The Chorus worry the stars will fall from the sky (*Thy.* lines 842ff.) which is significant considering the ancient Greeks and Romans saw stars as gods.⁶⁰⁹ The Messenger describes the reversal of nature with darkness falling at noon (lines 776-7). Similarly, the Chorus appeal to Phoebus to explain the same problem. They ask whether the order of the universe is plunged into chaos because of the evidence of unnatural signs and violent reactions in the physical world due to human immorality.⁶¹⁰ In the final dialogue between the brothers, Thyestes is unable to hold a glass of 'wine' (which is actually his sons' blood) because it becomes impossibly heavy (lines 986ff.). He reports a series of unusual events with rocking tables, shaking floors and heavenly disturbances (lines 989-94). The theme of causal connection is also evident from the physiological responses of Thyestes prior to the horrific revelations, when he complains that he is crying without knowing why (lines 950-1, 966-7. Cf. *Ep.* 99.15) and that he is suffering stomach pains just before Atreus presents the heads of his sons (lines 973, 999ff., 1041ff.).⁶¹¹ That Thyestes' feelings and state of mind are described through physical sensations and bodily symptoms is indicative of how passions involve the apparent loss of dignity and composure and that they are base and unnatural.⁶¹²

The baseness of *ira*: bestiality in the angry tragic characters

Nature, including animals, also functions as a key source of metaphors in Seneca's plays to communicate the baseness of anger by emphasising the non-human behaviour it produces.⁶¹³ These ideas are vividly expressed in *Medea* and *Thyestes* where the protagonists' rage is regularly likened to

⁶⁰⁹ Cf. Davis (2003) p. 68.

⁶¹⁰ Cf. *Thy.* lines 48ff., 103ff., 262ff., 665ff., 698ff., 700-2; 767ff., 789-826, 989ff.

⁶¹¹ Tarrant (1985) concludes: 'The scene is a harrowing portrayal of psychological disintegration, unique in ancient literature and for all its grotesque exaggeration, uncomfortably real' (p. 221) cf. *Thy.* lines 920-69. Here Seneca uses shock techniques in his anti-*exempla* to persuade his audience of the horrors of not following reason.

⁶¹² Cf. Zanobi (2014) p. 93.

⁶¹³ Cf. 2.5.1-2, 3.4.2-3.

bestial behaviour, further distancing them from humanity to confirm anger is not in accord with human nature.

Medea the animal

Medea's anger is conveyed by physical descriptions expressed in terms of evil and dark imagery including comparisons with nature's destructive elements, such as fire and sea metaphors and animals, for instance, her association with and likening to snakes.⁶¹⁴ The Corinthians' fear at the sight of Medea is reflected in their comparison of her with an animal capable of killing man, a pacing lioness bereft of her cubs (*Med.* lines 862ff. Cf. lines 853-5.). Creon uses '*ferox*' suggesting a '*wild animal/fera*' when he describes her approach (lines 186-7).⁶¹⁵ The Nurse recognises that: '*Something great looms, wild, monstrous, unnatural — magnum aliquid instat, efferum immane impium*' (line 395), preparing the audience for the play's barbarities. All these descriptions show Medea's detachment from rational humans who are distinguished from animals because of their capacity to reason (1.3.4ff.) and the depths she has sunk to through *ira*.

The beasts of Thyestes

In *Thyestes*, the characters are referred to in bestial terms from the outset, preparing the audience for the domination of *adfectus* and the brothers' inhumanity. The ghost of Tantalus in the Prologue is ordered to infect the '*beast-hearts/ferum pectus*' of his descendants (*Thy.* lines 85ff.), who are to suffer from the animal impulses of hunger and thirst in the perpetual way of Tantalus' mythological punishment.⁶¹⁶ This metaphorical deprivation is reflected in the lust for power, the sacrifice and devouring of children and *furor*, all characteristics of people dominated by passions, and in the images and motifs of the play.⁶¹⁷ The Chorus pray for the end of the '*bestial impulses/feros impetus*' of Tantalus' descendants (line 136), who himself had enjoyed a '*bestial feast/dapibus feris*' (line 150). Even in decadent dress, the way Thyestes is eating is boorish, described by the Messenger

⁶¹⁴ Cf. *Med.* lines 14, 653, 686ff., 773ff., 800-1, 819, 961-2; Nussbaum (1994) pp. 458-64.

⁶¹⁵ Cf. Boyle (2014) p. 180.

⁶¹⁶ Cf. *Thy.* lines 2-6, 97ff., 103, 119, 149ff.

⁶¹⁷ Cf. Boyle (1997) pp. 43-8.

using the terms '*ripping flesh/lancina*' (line 778) and '*gnaws/mandit*' (line 779), supporting Atreus' earlier description of his brother as a '*wild beast/fera*' (line 491).

Animal metaphors are developed to describe the characters. When he has lured Thyestes back to the kingdom, Atreus equates his anger with an Umbrian hunting dog in his lust for Thyestes' blood and governed by passions, he is unable to rein in his feelings (cf. *Thy.* line 496ff., 546-7).⁶¹⁸ The Messenger describes Atreus as a '*beast/ferus*' when reporting the murder of Thyestes' sons (line 721) and prior to their slaughter, compares his scowling eyes with those of an Indian tiger (lines 706ff.) and an Armenian lion, who even when his hunger has been sated, continues killing (lines 732ff.). Atreus' seeks rage to gratify his desire for greater horror than he currently experiences where '*nullum est satis*' (lines 256) and later has an insatiable appetite for it (cf. lines 249ff., 267ff.).⁶¹⁹ This raises the question of whether Atreus is truly satisfied, particularly because he continuously questions this.⁶²⁰ He suffers from the passion of desire or *appetite/libido*, which prompts him to seek inappropriate things, that by their very nature (as well as the methods used to acquire them), will never gratify him (cf. line 1053). This is because he is depending on externals which are ultimately beyond his control, have no connection to virtue and by extension, are not constituents of true happiness. This animal instinct, natural as it may be in beasts, when it roams uncontrolled in humans as it does in *Thyestes*, causes extensive destruction such as lust for death and torture proving there is nothing natural about *adfectus*.

Passions as 'madness'

Part of Seneca's definition of anger is its insanity.⁶²¹ Madness in the ancient world was commonly interpreted as (a) loss of reason or (b) possession by a '*spirit/daemon*' (3.3.3). Despite the references to their insanity and possession, the protagonists remain responsible for their actions. The

⁶¹⁸ Cf. 1.7.4, 1.9.3.

⁶¹⁹ Cf. Poe (1969) p. 366; Boyle (1997) pp. 43-6.

⁶²⁰ Cf. *Thy.* lines 252ff., 273ff., 889-90, 893-5, 899-90, 912, 919, 1053, 1056-68.

⁶²¹ Cf. 1.1.2-4, 1.7.4, 3.3.3, 3.4.4, 3.28.1.

sickness of passions remains evident even when those who act under the influence of anger have responses which are not necessarily manifested in frenzy: they may appear to be rational even though they are mentally sick. What is most terrifying about Medea is that she does not lose control – her murders are carried out in a thoroughly reasoned and cruelly calm state.⁶²² Similarly, Atreus' calculated crime, conducted in solemn religious rites (cf. *Thy.* lines 545, 685ff.) is particularly terrifying and shocking, largely because of the absence of frenzied anger and the fact that he does not appear to display moral struggle (lines 192-5),⁶²³ apart from momentary hesitation, to which he responds by urging courage (cf. lines 283-4, 324-30). He demonstrates a well-reasoned response to his situation that is incompatible with the suggestion that anger is caused by possession and madness and indicates that a Stoic view of madness, in this sense, is very different to a mainstream view of madness and how it is conventionally understood.

The apparent inconsistencies in Seneca's presentation of the lack of reasoning in anger in *De Ira* and the calculation behind Medea and Thyestes' revenge is explainable and still compatible with Stoicism if Seneca's dramatic intent is considered. Seneca established the role of judgement and *voluntas* in the formation of passions in the sense that an individual would 'wish' to behave in a particular way and for anger, this is the wish to take revenge (2.1.4, 3.4).⁶²⁴ From a Stoic perspective, men would rather choose not to decline into anger and would prefer to remove it: in a tragic context, it is not unexpected to witness characters who would realise anger as opposed to stopping it at the point of pre-passions. It is precisely this misapplication or inversion of Stoic ideals through which Seneca illustrates the necessity of correcting thinking, that it is an

⁶²² The extent of reason and its role in Medea's decision-making is debatable. Durham (1984) argues: 'She is a pure frenzy of passion whose hesitations and abrupt changes of mood bear witness to her almost total loss of self-control' (p. 56). While Berry (1996) notes that: 'Medea is fully conscious. She gives passion license and, in return, gains power' (p. 12) and Guastella (2001) when discussing Medea's rage observes that: '... this *ira* is also subject to a precise and perverted *ratio*, a reckoning which is extraordinarily accurate in all its calculations' (p. 201). Cf. Tobin (1966) p. 66; Littlewood (2004) pp. 85-6.

⁶²³ Cf. *Thy.* lines 241-3, 249-54, 703-5; Tobin (1966) p. 68; Davis (2003) p. 55.

⁶²⁴ For the role of will in passions, see pp. 80-1.

individual's responsibility to do this and that it is within his sphere of control to do so.⁶²⁵

Medea's sickness

Rather than blaming her for her actions, the Nurse ascribes Medea's '*madness/insanit'* to divine possession comparing her to a Maenad, a woman possessed by a god (usually Bacchus) resulting in superhuman strength (*Med.* lines 382ff.).⁶²⁶ The Chorus make the same allusion to Bacchus (lines 849ff.), as does Medea herself (line 806). Medea recognises that she is out of control and battles with her conscience. She wishes that Creusa had children to kill and as this is not the case, she sadly concludes that her sons are '*my one-time children/liberi quondam mei*' (line 924) and she accepts that Creusa would be the one who raises them. Yet, she is only childless because she chooses to kill her children, not because of the legal system, which merely separates her from them.⁶²⁷ Her mental confusion is reflected in her physical sensations – she complains of a beating heart, frozen limbs and a trembling breast compared with the heat of *ira* which has momentarily left her – showing the extensive impact of passions (lines 926-7). She is too engulfed in passion to recede, though some scholars over-generously emphasise the role of the Furies and her brother's ghost in her decision to punish Jason, claiming that it is they who force her to kill her sons.⁶²⁸

Atreus's possession

Initially, Atreus evokes inspiration from his ancestor Pelops and grandfather Tantalus to assert himself (*Thy.* lines 242-3).⁶²⁹ This is significant because *Thyestes* opens with the Fury Megaera telling the ghost of Tantalus that the family feud is not only to be continued but will be accelerated (lines 25ff.). Atreus is described by the Messenger as being like a man overcome by

⁶²⁵ Cf. Star (2012) pp. 62-5.

⁶²⁶ Cf. Ohlander (1989) pp. 268-70.

⁶²⁷ Cf. Treggiari (1991) pp. 466-71.

⁶²⁸ Cf. Motto (1973) p. 86.

⁶²⁹ Cf. Braden (1970) pp. 16-7. Davis (2003) identifies that the obsession with heredity is also clear from the repeated question of paternity in *Thy.* lines 240, 324-33, 1099ff. (p. 43). Sideri-Tolia (2004) suggests that the Claudian heritage of violent rule has influenced Nero and that this may be reflected in the cycle of terror in *Thy.* (p. 180).

madness/furens (line 683). Unknowingly, he is possessed by the ghost of Tantalus who was instructed by the Fury to create disorder (Cf. lines 83ff., 101ff.). Despite his early concern that: ‘*The rage that burns my heart// needs to become more savage. I want to be filled// with greater horror — Non satis magno meum ardet furore pectus, impleri iuuat maiore monstro*’ (lines 252-4), his wish for impetus is soon fulfilled: ‘*Yes, I agree. A trembling frenzy shakes my heart// and stirs it deep inside; I am swept away – to where// I do not know, but I am — Fateor. Tumultus pectora attonitus quatit penitusque uoluit; rapior et quo nescio, sed rapior*’ (lines 260-2).⁶³⁰ On first reading, the idea of possession may be perceived as an attempt to absolve Atreus from responsibility and encourage audience support for him. However, within the context of the rest of the play, Atreus desires recognition for his vengeance and is proud of the atrocities he causes, long before he realises that any ‘possession’ occurs.

Through the violence of the dramas, Seneca demonstrates the requirement of reason and virtue and through negative *exempla* invites his audience to recognise this need. However, in *Medea* and *Thyestes*, due to generic constraints, the nature of the plot and for entertainment purposes, this conflict is not resolved. The characters of *Medea* and *Thyestes* may demonstrate Stoic tendencies but there are marked inconsistencies between the characters’ proclaimed attitudes and their behaviours. The individuals are self-serving, manipulating people for personal gain without concern for universal good and express various degrees of anger and the desire to take revenge for the injuries caused to them. In *Medea*, attitudes towards fate are contentious, with Medea blaming it for her demise (*Med.* lines 207-8, 219-20), at the same time as she claims to be above it (line 520). Atreus arrogantly lacks interest in other people’s opinions, but this is not because he is unaffected by them as is a Sage and his desires are sated by revenge not self-sufficiency. Although the Chorus in *Thyestes* proclaim Stoic ideals (such as their views about ruling in *Thy.* lines 336-401), they

⁶³⁰ Cf. Poe (1969) p. 362; Dodson-Robinson (2010) pp. 51-2; Staley (2010) pp. 43-4.

still succumb to the *adfectus* fear, to which a Stoic would not be victim (lines 875ff.). While Jason orders Medea to control her passions, he does not apply the same wisdom to his own life which is governed by ‘*fear/timor*’ (*Med.* line 103).⁶³¹ Fear and subsequent anger is prominent in tragedies and is felt by all the characters at various stages. It appears to cease in the main characters, not because of Stoic acceptance of circumstances, or by its replacement with the *constantia* caution, which would make them aware of any potential danger and respond in a reasonable way by avoiding or accepting its impact but because the individuals believe that they have conquered the cause of their fear, invariably a person, by carrying out malicious revenge. The characters in *Medea* and *Thyestes* complain about their situations because they do not take responsibility for the consequences of their actions and endure what they could have changed: instead, they blame fate and the gods for events.⁶³² A Stoic on the other hand sees true liberation as being fearless, without base desires and having supreme control, which can be gained through philosophy and its application to remove passions.⁶³³

⁶³¹ Cf. *Med.* lines 255ff., 415-6, 434ff., 519, 529.

⁶³² Cf. *Med.* lines 207-8, 219-20, 431-4, 519; *Thy.* lines 604-6.

⁶³³ Cf. *Ep.* 8.7; 75.16-8.

Chapter Five

Seneca's tragic characters as anti-exempla

Analysing how an audience may respond to the characters' plights, I argue that the presence of Stoic ideas within the plays can provoke consideration of an alternative way of living to how the characters behave and in doing so improve an audience's outlook. By considering the responses which the plays invoke in their audience, this chapter inquires into whether the tragic characters in *Medea* and *Thyestes* could be cured by applying Seneca's techniques and provides scope to consider the likelihood of successful therapy for people who suffer from anger in its most extreme form. By considering the characters as if they were 'real people', plagued by emotional problems, as has been revealed through material discussed in previous chapters, I will be able to consider how their attitudes could be improved by employing Stoic methodology so that their mental stability is retained. I identify evidence of these techniques in the plays, asking which of these methods would be useful for Medea and Atreus to have adopted. This is to demonstrate how, if the characters were real people, they could take measures to improve their attitudes and conduct. I conclude that, while practising philosophy would have avoided the disasters of the tragedies, the genre will not permit such self-improvement in the characters but may serve to do so in an audience.

Audience reactions

The *Epistles* are specific in modes and instructions of technical Stoicism as are the moral essays that aim at a broader audience who may or may not take the advice offered. In comparison, the audience of the tragedies is left to infer philosophical requirements by responding to the negative examples in the plays. It would be inappropriate to preach doctrines explicitly in a play because it would disrupt the flow of the action. However, by assimilating philosophical themes in a dramatic context, Seneca invites his audience to question their value system and compare their behaviour with that of the characters with a view to revising existing beliefs about the world. Such reflection is likely to continue after leaving the theatre as the plays are

inconclusive – the action falls in the middle of a mythological story and the character's anger has not been resolved leading to the suggestion that there may be further vengeance taken by Jason and Thyestes. Such philosophical contemplation is at the heart of Stoicism and is a fitting conclusion to observing or reading Seneca's plays.⁶³⁴ There are several possible reactions that may be had towards individuals within the plays and I focus primarily on those towards Medea and Atreus because these characters are most affected by anger in its extreme form, though I refer to other characters where appropriate.

Audience responses can also depend on whether the plays are read or viewed as a performance. If a play is witnessed, audience members can obtain an overall view of the characters as they develop, and judgments and feelings could vacillate as the actions unfold and in response to how characters behave towards one another. These opinions may also be influenced by other audience reactions. Such an experience would produce a more natural reflection of how people in real-life scenarios may be viewed; however, only after the play can feelings towards it be adequately consolidated and reflected upon to draw conclusions about how the characters are interpreted. By considering what Medea should have done, for example, moral views and feelings are likely to be revised for the better. There may also be a different reaction depending on whether the performance is seen or heard. Visual experiences invariably stimulate more evocative responses and bring the action to life: hearing a play allows the listener to develop his own picture of events in his mind which can produce even more subjective understandings.

If, however, plays are read different reactions can arise which are also affected by whether the plays are read in one sitting or over time. In the first instance, responses are likely to be more similar to if the plays were witnessed on stage because here too, the reader becomes involved in the action at a fast pace. If the plays are read act by act with a time lapse

⁶³⁴ For spiritual exercises, see Chapter Three *passim*.

between them, there is an opportunity for on-going reflection of events and behaviours. Loyalties towards characters may last longer as future events are anticipated and outcomes are imagined which may or may not be realised. Opinions can swing more dramatically as the acts are gone through if they are being watched but it is harder to maintain an overall picture. On the other hand, if plays are being read, there is the opportunity to re-read sections which were not understood, making this form of engagement more helpful in drawing conclusions from the plays and using these to improve one's outlook. In addition, the era in which the audience experiences the plays will affect the audience as people are shaped by their cultural and political environment. For instance, Medea and Atreus' reactions would be less surprising to Seneca's contemporary audience, based on their cultural expectations of vengeance and their knowledge of the myths from which the plots originate.

Responses towards Medea

Reactions towards the characters can affect whether it is plausible that they can be reformed through philosophy. Medea provokes mixed feelings in the audience as she can be seen as a character in a play but also may be compared with real people, such as the plight of an abandoned woman with small children who suffers emotionally. On the one hand, the audience is guided by other characters' united fear of a woman they present as ferocious, barbaric and noxious, which is supported by her wild appearance and atrocious criminality. The vehemence of Medea's words compels other characters to demand her silence.⁶³⁵ The degree to which Medea is mortal also affects how the audience relates to her. She embraces sorcery (*Med.* lines 680ff.), evokes the Underworld gods (lines 9ff.; 740ff.) and this association with magic may explain her behaviour – no ordinary, sane woman would kill her children.⁶³⁶ Medea contrasts with the anticipated role of a mother in Seneca's Rome, where a mother was regarded a 'figure of moral authority.'⁶³⁷ She has savagely dismembered her brother and

⁶³⁵ Cf. Chorus (*Med.* lines 114-5); Nurse (lines 150ff.); Creon (lines 188ff.) and Jason (line 530).

⁶³⁶ Cf. Roisman (2005) p. 82.

⁶³⁷ Cf. Gloyn (2017) p. 15.

threatens to attack the gods (line 424). In addition, she boasts of her divine heritage as the granddaughter of Sol, the Sun god (lines 28ff. Cf. line 210) and according to mythology, her mother is Idyia, an Ocean nymph and her aunt is Circe.⁶³⁸ By making a semi-divinity 'human' in her responses as has been the practice since Euripides, Seneca invites sympathy – only to add the dramatic twist of Medea's inhumane behaviour. Once again, the difference between human cruelty and the responsive traditional Olympian divinities or the indifference of the Stoic God (because divine order is not affected by prayer) is apparent. Medea cannot be a divinity according to Stoicism, not just because of her violence, but also because God does not experience passions, by which Medea is unashamedly driven.

Condemnation of Medea is the most common response to the play, as her vengeance appears unjust because it is disproportionate to the initial offence. However, Medea still suffers from the human struggles of love, children, loyalty and betrayal, showing the dilemmas of morality and the battle with passions, especially anger. The Nurse confirms Medea's isolation in a way which commands audience sympathy by emphasising the absence of native supporters, having a faithless husband and her loss of wealth: initially this suffering is at the heart of the presentation of Medea's circumstances rather than the witchcraft which is introduced later when she is preparing her revenge (*Med.* lines 164-5). Medea's identity as a wife has been threatened by her replacement Creusa. The audience can share Medea's desperation by imagining their feelings in similar circumstances when her exile is seen in terms of loss and there being a risk to her life. Viewing her sacrifices as the loss of a family, it may be considered fitting for Jason's loved ones to be taken. However, by taking a philosophical view, such as that which Seneca advocates, that exile is just a change of place, it could be accepted and tolerated with greater ease by not becoming angry at the loss of material things and of people. Similarly, Medea could have changed her situation and alleviated her anxieties if she had accepted the loss of Jason and been resigned to the idea that exile could have offered

⁶³⁸ For Medea's mythological background and the myth before Seneca, see Boyle (2014) pp. lxi-lxxviii.

her a secure future. Acceptance of her circumstances and realising Jason's betrayal does not really impact on her overall well-being would have prevented her anger from growing.

The Senecan and Stoic proposal that people are citizens of the universe is particularly relevant to Medea whose 'otherness' as being a foreigner and her differences from other people in the way she responds have alienated her. Jason blames Medea's temper and attitude on her exile: had she submitted to sovereign power she would have been able to stay in Corinth and Creon reinforces this (*Med.* lines 189-90). Jason encourages the audience to believe that Medea is responsible for her situation and that her departure from Corinth would be the best outcome for all concerned. The latter assumption cannot be disagreed with but other people's role in Medea's plight can be recognised because she misunderstands what is actually under her control and her reaction can be understood, if not condoned, despite its extreme nature. Although the Stoics permit killing, in instances where the individual is not saveable by punishment and re-education (cf. *Clem.* 1.21.1), Medea's acts would not have been condoned by Stoicism, despite the reasoning that Jason could not acknowledge or amend his mistakes.

Tragic characters are assumed to live up to their reputation or exceed the expectations of them and to do this from a Stoic perspective, they would have to forego reason and act according to the demands of *adfectus*. Mythologically, Medea has a propensity to violence and the audience could make allowances for her if they believe that some people are prone to anger and it is in her nature to be so (cf. 2.15, 19-20). Having witnessed the consequences of her actions carried out in anger, the Nurse recognises its signs (*Med.* line 394) predicting she will exceed her heinous crimes (line 393. Cf. lines 670ff.). Medea considers her former crimes to be training for a greater one (lines 906ff.). When as a virgin they were '*too trivial/levia...nimis*', she commands herself to: '*Let heavier pain surge// Greater crimes become me as a mother — gravior exurgat dolor;// maiora iam me scelera post partus decent*' (lines 49-50. Cf. lines 45ff.). While

'*gravior*' emphasises Medea's strength, her vulnerability is implied with '*pain/dolor*', as it is her anguish and sadness which is causing her to wish to inflict it on others. '*Dolor*' commonly occurs in the play to denote the anguish the characters are feeling as a consequence and cause of anger, showing how passions confuse reactions.⁶³⁹ The reference to motherhood and the implications of pregnancy from '*heavier/gravior*' contribute to the metaphor of Medea giving birth to vengeance and her later obsession with infanticide.⁶⁴⁰ By admitting that her previous crimes were only carried out in love, where '*tragic love raged/saevit infelix amor*' (line 136), she appears to have been motivated by *amor*, not *ira*.⁶⁴¹ Despite it being another complicated passion, Medea's love makes the audience more supportive of her plight, as many people compromise themselves when they are devoted to someone. In this respect, Medea is dramatising an intimate family relationship so that the audience can most closely relate to her difficulties from recalling personal intimate relationships.

If the audience views Medea's state as an illness and assigns her anger to external forces, they could be more sympathetic towards her (*Med.* lines 382ff., 806, 849ff.).⁶⁴² Yet while she uses these external forces as an excuse for her behaviour, she has made the decision to kill long before their presence in the play. However she is viewed, Seneca's presentation of Medea as an exaggerated and extreme character invites self-reflection in his audience of their own dark sides and shameful traits, prompting questions about whether they too are at risk of decline into similar evil. This reflects the moral role in Senecan drama of offering instruction in virtue and vice should a comparable situation to hers arise in the real world.⁶⁴³ After

⁶³⁹ Cf. *Med.* lines 137-40, 151, 155, 446, 554, 907-15, 944, 951, 1011, 1016, 1019. Boyle (2014) identifies fourteen occurrences of the term '*dolor*' in the play, eleven of which are used by *Med.* (five apostrophised in lines 139-40, 914, 944, 1016, 1019) to focus on her psychological state of mind (p. 127).

⁶⁴⁰ Cf. Boyle (2014) p. 127. Atreus also gives 'birth' to revenge (*Thy.* lines 1096ff.).

⁶⁴¹ For the connection between *ira/amor*, see *Med.* lines 849-51; 866-9; 937-44. The suggestion of '*saevit*' accompanying '*amor*' suggests a Stoic view about the unruliness of passions. Cf. Gill (2013).

⁶⁴² For Medea's madness, see p. 211.

⁶⁴³ For drama offering moral instruction, see pp. 20, 29-33, 46-7; Slavitt (1992) p. ix; Nussbaum (1994) p. 445.

checking their behaviour, the audience may be inspired by the Stoic ideal of controlling passions to avoid becoming like Medea. Even without knowledge of philosophical doctrines, the presentation of Medea is such that the audience can recognise that they would not want to follow her worldview.⁶⁴⁴

When seeking ways to take revenge, she wishes that Jason had a brother whom she could kill (*Med.* line 125). Now that Creusa has gone, Medea believes that the balance is restored: as a wife who was banished by her husband, she has now banished a wife and she becomes a mother again in the absence of her sons' stepmother (line 928). Medea's reasoning is tainted by *ira* which is why her logic is so disturbing and illustrates her irrationality caused by disturbances in the soul resulting from anger. Again, Seneca toys with his audience: they may understand Medea's feelings of being bereft, but sympathy prevents them from condoning her actions. Medea momentarily regains a degree of humanity when, having decided on her method of vengeance, her anger wavers. Her maternal instinct emerges so that she proceeds to vacillate over whether to kill her children.⁶⁴⁵ This tension creates optimism in the audience with the hope that she will not carry out her proposal to murder her sons. The viewer is relieved when Medea's anger subsides, resulting in a temporary conclusion that *ira* is 'controllable'. However, Medea's indecision causes confusion: she vacillates between desiring revenge and reconciliation (lines 893ff.).⁶⁴⁶ Her

⁶⁴⁴ Schiesaro (2003) critiques the argument proposed by Nussbaum (1993b) that Stoicism promotes 'critical spectatorship' so that the audience observes tragedy with a 'concerned but critical detachment.' This suggests that the audience is vigilant without being impressionable and judge and question the characters rather than accepting them. This view may be an accurate assessment of the dramatist's goal but may be an unrealistic expectation of the audience's response, particularly when many men are at best *proficientes*. Schiesaro correctly points out that the 'repellent nature' of the central characters does not necessarily discourage audience 'emotional identification' or mean that 'we could consider the chorus's moralizing orthodoxy as "a guide for the spectator's response"' (p. 244) cf. Nussbaum (1993b) p. 137. The audience can and perhaps should identify emotionally even with the 'repellent' characters as these negative *exempla* reflect the worst in man and that which requires the greatest attention to change, which I believe is Seneca's purpose for their inclusion in the manner they are presented. Cf. Littlewood (2004) pp. 172-3; Staley (2010) pp. 32-4; Trinacty (2015) p. 37.

⁶⁴⁵ Cf. Gill (1987) pp. 31-6.

⁶⁴⁶ Atreus' indecision arises when he considers the question of paternity and whether, if the children are not Thyestes', they should be saved (*Thy.* line 324).

inability to remain constant in her thinking is indicative of her irrationality caused by her feelings of loss and anger. On the one hand, the audience may be repelled by the 'villain'. On the other hand, they can sympathise with her plight and to an extent identify with the ethical dilemmas which are contorted by passions, as Stoicism proposes, particularly with the suggestion of the individual's insanity and sickness of *ira* as is demonstrated in these plays. An alternative response, in keeping with a Stoic interpretation of the play, would be to consider Medea as a *proficiens*, still suffering from passions but, based on her attitudes and behaviours, she appears to demonstrate little, if any, commitment to philosophy. In the case of Medea, Seneca is more likely to be presenting a character in need of therapeutic intervention and philosophical guidance than one who has begun their journey and by demonstrating the extent of the problems with untamed passions, encouraging his audience to see the necessity of extirpating *ira*.

Medea's lack of accountability and denial of her sphere of control makes it harder to wholeheartedly support her actions. She holds conflicting attitudes towards fate – blaming it for her situation (*Med.* lines 218-22) but claiming to be above it (line 520) – claiming other people are responsible for her misfortunes (Creon in line 143 and the consequences of her liaison with Jason in lines 207-10) and, at times, being morally conscious of her behaviour (lines 923-35). Nevertheless, she is still prepared to commit the '*ultimate crime/ultimum scelus*' of killing her children, showing her awareness of right and wrong but she justifies her decision by the conviction that they are being punished for their father's wrongs which is an indication of her perversion of moral responsibility (line 925). The murder of her sons terminates her active role as a mother and releases her from an emotional connection with Jason on which she had depended. Seneca wishes his audience to see Medea succumbing to passion but still in control and any wavering is to arouse sympathy and to create dramatic tension, rather than to suggest cowardice in carrying out her plan.

While Medea's arguments for saving her children may be reasonable, in that they are innocent of their father's 'crimes' against her, Medea's calculations

are not driven by reason but are based on love, with '*amor*' referring to sexual and conjugal love (*Med.* lines 937-9) which she associates with '*pietas*', perhaps associated with maternal love (lines 943-4) with one passion being replaced by another and with this confusion for Medea, hence why her sons do not survive.⁶⁴⁷ After embracing her children, Medea realises that she will lose them when she is exiled and so Jason deserves to have them taken from him now (lines 945-51). Medea's spirit is renewed with anger when she considers the impact of her impending exile which takes over any rationality she may have started to regain: she refers to the Fury who avenges wrongs done to family members and despite a certain reluctance, she agrees to follow anger's lead (lines 951-3). She goes so far as to wish that she had borne more children to punish Jason more, citing the Theban princess Niobe who had seven sons (lines 954-7). At this point the audience knows that her *ira* will win and her sons are doomed.

Arguably, Seneca could be seen to be leading his audience to believe that it is right for the characters to fear Medea. The danger she poses is very real in the play: the Nurse expresses her fears about her mistress' violent temperament (cf. *Med.* lines 394-6, 670ff.), Creon shows that he is anxious about the safety of his state in Medea's presence (cf. lines 179ff., 269f.) and Jason is afraid of her reaction because of his knowledge of her previous behaviour (lines 431ff.). Seneca's Stoic proposals for caution and a realistic response to imminent threat, can be consolidated if pre-passions such as trembling (which is common in threatening situations) are acknowledged to prevent full blown *adfectus* (here fear). Following Stoic advice by viewing Medea as an 'indifferent' in that she cannot affect genuine well-being, would lead to neither the characters on stage nor the audience fearing Medea.

While she carries out her crimes singlehandedly, Medea is not self-sufficient like a Sage: her resourcefulness depends on her magical powers and she calls for support from the Underworld gods, amongst others.⁶⁴⁸ The closest Medea comes to a Stoic approach is her pragmatic attitude towards kingly

⁶⁴⁷ Cf. Boyle (2014) p. 362

⁶⁴⁸ For Stoic self-sufficiency and the completeness of virtue, see pp. 15, 25, 113.

wealth which she claims to despise, as one would expect of a Stoic (*Med.* lines 540-1). While Medea may not understand them to have similarities with philosophical doctrines, her attitudes towards virtue may be read as indicating a Stoic outlook. When she seeks an audience within the play for her revenge, she also warns us: '*Don't hide and squander// Virtue — non in occulto tibi est perdenda uirtus*' (lines 976-7), suggesting that it is important to display good qualities, even though she may be referring to '*virtus*' in the sense of 'courage', rather than living well or excellence of character.⁶⁴⁹ Similarly, in a feisty debate with the Nurse, who claims that virtue is praised if timed well (line 160), Medea insists that virtue should be neither hidden or squandered (line 161). Even though Medea's references to virtue are used to serve her own needs and they can be perceived as a distortion of Stoic sentiments, their presence still highlights the important value of philosophy and she is correct in thinking that virtue should be demonstrated in all circumstances.

Reacting to Atreus

In some respects, Atreus's attitudes are shaped by personal experience – anger has torn apart the house of Atreus with civil war and usurpation⁶⁵⁰ – as well as the assumption that Thyestes is again seeking to take over the throne.⁶⁵¹ Nonetheless, he remains thoroughly despicable and at no point does he invite audience pity towards him for the historic treatment by his brother. He is a tyrant who instils fear and his vile murder of innocent children is appalling, worsened by his serving of the boys at a banquet to their father. While anger motivates Atreus' initial action and he complains about external powers moving him (*Thy.* lines 260-2), by the time he carries out his nephews' murders his actions are cruel and callous. The Messenger describes how Atreus kills a boy using language which indicates the brutality of *ira* and its control over its subject. Atreus' rages and swells with anger ('*saevit atque ira tumet*' line 737) and he is oblivious to whom he is raging against ('*oblitus in quem fureret*' line 739). The Chorus reinforce the

⁶⁴⁹ Cf. Boyle (2014) pp. 169, 379.

⁶⁵⁰ Cf. *Thy.* lines 4, 18ff., 28ff., 40ff., 133.

⁶⁵¹ Cf. *Thy.* lines 201-4; 289; 302ff.; 314-6.

murder's cruelty by declaring it a '*savage crime/saevum scelus*' (line 744). Atreus is determined his revenge will inflict great pain and death is ruled out as too kind (line 257), which is savage and conflicts fundamentally with philosophical views about justice.

Atreus' conduct raises the issue of human capacity for, and if there are any limits to, evil. Although he never directly offers moral condemnation, the Satelles declares that the king's response is: '*Too much! Even for your rage — maius hoc ira est malum*' (line 259). This is because Atreus' actions are calculated, rather than spontaneous, as one might initially expect from an irrational movement of the soul demonstrating how the agent can be manipulated by passions to the extent they direct their thinking. Atreus' behaviour encourages sympathy to lie with Thyestes and judging Atreus as behaving inappropriately. One could conclude that Thyestes' punishment is neither deserved nor appropriate (particularly after he admits his responsibility for the injuries he has caused and expresses remorse (lines 513-4. Cf. lines 532-3) and appeals to Jupiter for a combined punishment with Atreus believing shared guilt is appropriate for the brothers (lines 1087ff.)

Stoic consistency and the complexity of the tragic characters

Recognition is one of the ways that a dramatic character's identity is publicly acknowledged and to achieve this, characters must be consistent, almost to the extent of being predictable. Consistency in personality and attitudes is also important in Stoicism as it reflects moral consistency because '*mental health/sanitas*' depended on a '*serene and consistent temper/in tranquillitate quadam constantiaque*' (Cic. *Tusc.* 3.9).⁶⁵² The harmonious condition of the mind present in a consistent man was often conveyed in a music metaphor to demonstrate the necessity of being in agreement with oneself (cf. *Ep.* 74.30).⁶⁵³ This is not possible when under the influence of anger which is responsible for psychological fluctuation (*fluctuatio animi*) that occurs when the *anima* is no longer governed by reason. In his advice

⁶⁵² Cf. 2.7.1; *Ep.* 20.2-5; 31.8; Cic. *Tusc.* 3.31, 4.39; Stob. *Ecl.* 2.7.5b1 (60.7-8W).

⁶⁵³ Cf. Cic. *Fin.* 3.21.

to Lucilius, Seneca believes it is important to uphold a constant 'character/persona' or at least be 'recognised/adgnosci' by other people because playing the role of one man is most excellent but only a Sage can do this consistently (though evidence of this can be found in a *proficiens* 'Istud sapienti perfecto contingit, aliquatenus et proficienti provectorque' Ep. 35.4). This is because it requires consistency/*constantia* and concord/*concordia* of psychology and action (Ep. 120.22).⁶⁵⁴

In his prose, Seneca encourages self-command to maintain concord within the soul, such as through the political metaphor of a strong *animus* as a king commanding what is proper versus the weak *animus*, the tyrant, who is taken over by *adfectus* ('excipiunt et instant', Ep. 114.24).⁶⁵⁵ In the tragedies, self-address is used by the characters to 'fashion themselves' and command the soul to maintain passions.⁶⁵⁶ The characters achieve consistency in the sense that they are recognizable figures, self-defined through self-address and self-command but in a non-Stoic manner.⁶⁵⁷ Attempts to achieve consistency of mind and action are to rouse destructive behaviour, as opposed to concord for positive ends as a Stoic would seek.⁶⁵⁸ In a dramatic context this indicates the characters' struggle with psychological fluctuation/*fluctuatio animi* and that the individual has power over his soul but the advice in Seneca's prose to use self-command to stop passions is inverted. For example, Medea uses self-naming to fuel deluded omnipotence, when she equates herself with the forces of nature, such as thunderbolts, reflecting her loudness in the play and her implied fiery destruction like lightning (*Med.* lines 166-7). This is an example of the metatheatricity of the play through which the characters acknowledge their mythical reputation.⁶⁵⁹

⁶⁵⁴ Cf. Ep. 77; 109.6; Star (2012) pp. 65-9.

⁶⁵⁵ Cf. Star (2012) p. 39.

⁶⁵⁶ Cf. Star (2012) p. 62.

⁶⁵⁷ Cf. Star (2012) pp. 68-9.

⁶⁵⁸ Cf. Star (2012) 'Their performance of their crimes of revenge is the result of a controlled and consistent process of self-monitoring and self-shaping' (pp. 62-3).

⁶⁵⁹ Self-naming is frequently used in Seneca for self-construction to show self-awareness and pride in one's deeds. Medea names herself eight times in Seneca (*Med.* lines 8, 166, 171, 517, 524, 567, 910, 934) but only once in Euripides (*Med.* line 402). Cf. Fitch and McElduff (2008) p. 163.

If the characters held consistent and constructive attitudes and their behaviour was predictable, not only would the outcome of their actions be positive but their relationship with other people would be beneficial. Such virtuous consistency includes keeping the same expression despite the circumstances, as great men are reported to have done, for example Socrates (cf. 2.7.1)⁶⁶⁰ and Cato (*Ep.* 104.30).⁶⁶¹ Medea is, at the very least, perverting the Stoic sentiment of consistency and possibly parodying it, in the sense that she is largely aggressive, manipulative and scheming, traits of which the other characters in the play are aware and draw attention to, for Seneca to show the extent of her misguided self-opinion and her erroneous conduct which is driven by anger.⁶⁶² Atreus' constancy too is a mark of the inverted Stoic sentiments in the play, as he too has self-created the persona of an angry tyrant ('*tyranno... iratus Atreus*', *Thy.* lines 177-80) who rules by brutality and fear (lines 201-4; 288-9; 312ff.). The continued commitment to an irrational motivator which Seneca's characters display is because they are governed by passions. Medea and Atreus are playing the one role '*unum hominem agere*' which Seneca advises for Lucilius (*Ep.* 120.22) but in a negative way. Through seeking consistency in wickedness and being driven by passions, their failures show the importance of perfecting a rational self so that errors in judgements that have the kind of disastrous consequences that are seen in the plays are no longer made.⁶⁶³

For Seneca, role-playing and identity (in the form of self-dramatisation) are of great concern to affirm his characters' status and their reputation, threats to which are met with explosive reactions.⁶⁶⁴ Consequently, Senecan figures (mis)identify themselves through a specific social persona which causes problems when these constructs are threatened, as is the case in the tragedies, for it is this which creates dramatic material. Medea's revenge is

⁶⁶⁰ Cf. *Ep.* 104.28; *Helv.* 13.4.4; *Cic. Tusc.* 3.31.

⁶⁶¹ Cf. Bartsch (2015) pp. 194ff.

⁶⁶² Cf. *Med.* lines 179-82, 393-5, 670ff.

⁶⁶³ Gill (2009) also notes the perceived unified and consistent character of Medea who is 'single-mindedly focused on hatred revenge and violence and revelling in the evil of her own motivation' and indicates Atreus shares similar qualities (p. 66). Cf. *Med.* lines 1-55, 129-36, 893-925.

⁶⁶⁴ Cf. Littlewood (1997) pp. 72-3.

motivated by the fact that her function as wife has not been appropriately acknowledged by Jason. At the time of her perceived 'triumph' after killing her second son, she remarks: '*Ungrateful Jason. Recognise your wife? — ingrate Iason. coniugem agnoscis tuam?*' (*Med.* line 1021). This phrase can be interpreted in many ways. Medea may be asking 'Do you give me now the recognition which I deserve?' or 'Do you recognise your true wife? Not Creusa?' or 'Do you recognise the particular character of your wife?'.⁶⁶⁵ I interpret this phrase to mean that Medea is asking whether Jason recognises her power, strength and the abilities she had repeatedly displayed during their marriage, such as the theft of the Golden Fleece i.e. does he recognise and remember the characteristics by which Medea defines herself and by which she wishes to be defined?

The appeal to be recognised echoes Medea questioning whether Jason will underestimate her (*Med.* line 122), which is significant when she refers to fire and sea indicating her influence over the elements (line 121. Cf. lines 166-7). This is Jason's problem. He does not know his former wife and incorrectly believes she would prioritise her children over her failed marriage (lines 442-3). In a Stoic sense this would be having appropriate concern for other people and considering the children to be preferred indifferents. Whichever interpretation of '*coniugem agnoscis tuam*' is chosen, evidently Medea is seeking acknowledgement of her strength both internally and externally, possibly with due cause based on her experience of being belittled and threatened. The desire for acknowledgement evidenced by the notion of recognition is also present in *Thyestes*. On seeing his sons' severed heads and being asked if he knows them, Thyestes admits that he recognises his brother (*Thy.* line 1006) to confirm that he knows his brother's vicious capabilities and that he was right to fear them. The consequence of the individual's anger becomes proof of their identity and in the plays Seneca presents characters who are challenging sound philosophical principles of consistency to illustrate the need to remove

⁶⁶⁵ Cf. Fitch and McElduff (2008) p. 158.

obstacles, such as anger, to the perfection of a steadfast *anima* and coherent virtuous action.

As well as her powerful persona, Medea demonstrates vulnerability through her introversion, making her a character to whom the audience can easily relate because, as non-philosophers, people commonly turn inwards when they are feeling threatened and are unable to view their circumstances rationally. This trait is evident when she refers to herself in the third person, addresses body parts, such as her mind and hand,⁶⁶⁶ her self-naming⁶⁶⁷ or by using the third person pronoun,⁶⁶⁸ through which she distances herself from her situation. The self-reference in the third person demonstrates a psychological disintegration compared with her initial perceived consistency in being focused on vengeance, demonstrating how anger destroys the angry as much, if not more, than the objects at which it is directed.⁶⁶⁹ In places, self-address is a motivational tool, such as when Medea urges herself into action with a military metaphor telling herself to arm herself with wrath in preparation to kill in total frenzy (*Med.* lines 51-2) and '*rumpe iam segnes moras*' (line 54) (the urgency of which is conveyed by the literal translation '*Act now, break off sluggish delays*').⁶⁷⁰

In their dramatic context, both Atreus and Medea are conspicuously self-conscious of their place in their families' legends and are determined to have a substantial role in future story-telling. Medea's progression to fulfilling her mythological status occurs in three instances of self-address, which arise as her crime develops: '*Medea is left/Medea superest*' (line 166), '*I'll become Medea/Medea fiam*' (line 171) and '*Now I am Medea/Medea nunc sum*' (line 910).⁶⁷¹ This self-identification is as important for Medea as it is for the characters and for the audience to see that she is carrying out what is expected of her according to the tradition of

⁶⁶⁶ Cf. *Med.* lines 895ff., 976-7, 987ff., 1012.

⁶⁶⁷ Cf. *Med.* lines 8, 517, 522, 910, 934.

⁶⁶⁸ Cf. *Med.* lines 129ff., 397ff., 562ff., 902ff.

⁶⁶⁹ Cf. Gill (2009) pp. 66-8.

⁶⁷⁰ Cf. Boyle (2014) p. 130.

⁶⁷¹ Cf. Johnson (1988) pp. 93-6; Littlewood (2004) pp. 103-6.

her name. It also confirms how Seneca is fulfilling the generic requirements of the play *Medea*. Horace insists that Medea's character is portrayed as '*fierce and indomitable/ferox invictaque*' (Hor. *Ars P.* line 123) and Seneca's Medea certainly captures these characteristics. She is restoring the sense of identity which she lost through Jason's abandonment and ironically the very passion which first made her a victim, by succumbing to anger and accomplishing her vengeance; passion creates, not destroys her in the sense she feels she is 'Medea' again.⁶⁷² The irony is that, because a passion, *ira*, is responsible, Medea is not unified in a Stoic sense, but one that is corrupted and unsustainable, that will fluctuate with her false judgements, illustrating to the audience how dependence on passions is superficial and threatening to the soul.

The introversion of the protagonist is also evident in *Thyestes*. Like Medea, Atreus regularly addresses himself, at times referring to himself in the third person to demonstrate his distress and for other reasons too, such as to urge infamous action and for self-characterisation: '*An angry Atreus/iratus Atreus*' (*Thy.* line 180).⁶⁷³ Atreus defines himself as a tyrant and his monstrous crimes must fit with this self-presentation (lines 176ff.). Characters' engagement with violence and their evil within makes them as tragic as the plots and this internal conflict is more enthralling than details of daily life. Seneca draws his audience into the plays through the presentation of complex and unpredictable characters, leaving the viewer with torn loyalties and confusion as to where sympathies should lie. The linguistic ingenuity demonstrated in the protagonists' eloquent and persuasive speeches is captivating and manipulates feelings towards them.

Curing the tragic characters in *Medea* and *Thyestes*

While *De Ira* has a lengthy explanation of the cures of anger, there are few if any, detailed ways communicated through the tragic characters of how the protagonists can release themselves from this passion. Perhaps this is too much to expect in a tragic context where lessons on Stoic doctrine would

⁶⁷² Cf. Curley (1986) p. 196.

⁶⁷³ Cf. *Thy.* lines 176ff., 192ff., 266ff., 270.

not be natural to include. Nevertheless, the absence of philosophical behaviour in plays where philosophical themes are communicated is an indication of the need for the audience to consider alternative responses. For instance, any comments or advice to Medea are restricted to behavioural changes, such as being silent or leaving Corinth. They are not based on the recommendation that impression of injury is challenged as appearances can be deceptive (cf. 2.22.2). The main characters in the tragedies, if they existed in reality, may appear to be the worst kind of people, the sort whose reformation is not possible and those whom the Stoics would believe appropriate to kill as the only reasonable way to deal with them on the grounds that death would save them from themselves and protect other people if it had been demonstrated that they were irredeemable after failing to reform.⁶⁷⁴

While this interpretation on the surface may appear to conflict with Seneca's ideal that everyone can be improved and that all vices are removable (2.12.1-13.2. Cf. 3.8.7), the characters' errors and outrages serve to prompt alternative ways in thinking and living showing the requirement of self-improvement. In my view, this is one of the major reasons why Seneca employs philosophical attitudes in his dramas. While Seneca's complicated characters may show evidence of Stoic traits, they also demonstrate the need for philosophical training, and this maintains dramatic tension as the audience is unsure how they will behave next. In terms of educational value, such erratic behaviour forces the audience to engage with the characters and prompts ongoing reflection throughout and after the play. The most obvious need is assistance in removing passions as it is these which cause the greatest damage to themselves and to other people. Akin to this is the overreliance on other people and depending on fate and the gods to answer their problems. In addition, there is the problem of their desiring of external goods in the belief that this will empower them and provide tangible evidence of their status, as they attempt to meet conventional expectations

⁶⁷⁴ Cf. 1.14-1.15; 1.16.3-4; 1.19.7. 2.31.8; *Clem.* 1.12.1. For how Stoics proposed to deal with irredeemable people, see pp. 116, 218.

which prove to be contrary to the philosophical demands of Stoicism and which Seneca believes are common causes of anger. If Seneca has achieved his goal of inspiring Stoic attitudes, his audience would take the School's attitude that everyone is deserving of correction and people have a social responsibility to help. In this light, I consider how the characters are or should have been assisted with their passions by highlighting the occasions when the Stoic solutions to passions are offered by minor characters and examining how this advice is responded to and if it is accepted by the protagonists. Thus, I will show whether if it had been implemented, the character's anger would have either never arisen or have quickly abated.

Saving Medea

It could be asked at what point Medea could have been saved from herself and how this could have been achieved. Medea's self-awareness is ironic. She demonstrates profound knowledge about her feelings and circumstances and her place in the tradition of Medeas before her, for example, when she boasts of the strength of her anger which could not be restrained by the forces of nature (*Med.* lines 411-4). Applied appropriately, she could use this potential for carrying out the Stoic spiritual exercises: however, she does not use this information to improve herself in the Stoic sense. Instead, she employs it to enhance her villainy and any *praemeditatio malorum* is to ascertain the obstacles she may face to fulfilling her vengeance. There is no evidence of *recognitio*, partly because the play is set in one day and because, having seen her character develop across the acts, the audience can recognise that she would not rationally examine her conduct to improve her behaviour or to control her anger. Medea shows no interest in the challenges which she has to overcome to reinstate reason as a governing force and demonstrates no obvious desire to be restored to mental equilibrium.

So many of Medea's habits and values need to be changed; most significantly her emotional reactions which plague her life. She has an over-inflated sense of self-importance which makes her convinced that she does

not deserve to be treated the way she is and that it is right for her to respond as she does (*Med.* line 120). Her feelings of persecution prevent her from trying to live harmoniously with the Corinthians. They never accept her, for example, they wish to silence her (line 114) but she makes no effort towards friendship. Instead, she destroys their royal family by killing Creusa and burning Corinth (lines 879-80) as she strives to fulfil her mythological status and secure the reputation which has made everyone fear her (cf. lines 45-50, 423-4, 976ff.). Medea seeks out anger rather than avoiding it and there are repeated instances of the destruction caused by her *ira* before and during the play. She is aware of the sensations of anger arising but succumbs to them rather than challenging the involuntary pre-passion responses (lines 926-7).⁶⁷⁵

During their decision to be or become villains, Seneca's characters have moments of hesitation before their crimes are committed when they are considering potential responses demonstrating the extent of their control over their actions or possible demonstration of potential for redemption. For example, Medea's desire for revenge alternates between a longing for a reunion with Jason and a desire for his destruction (*Med.* lines 893ff.), while Atreus wavers over the killing of the children which he worries may be his (*Thy.* line 324). This, combined with a loss of nerve (*Thy.* lines 283-4; *Med.* lines 895, 927-8, 988-9), is evidence that even though initially *ira* had roused both characters into action, its force is short-lived (1.17.4) and unsubstantial (1.20.2). The instances of indecision in Medea are momentary, possibly to keep the action of the play flowing or to create dramatic tension through building suspense in the plot, leaving the audience unsure how she will choose to act.⁶⁷⁶ Either way, they demonstrate how in drama, the conventional techniques of anger management are not constructively utilised. Such hesitation was also a feature in Seneca's prose writings

⁶⁷⁵ Nussbaum (1994) astutely notes that: 'Philosophy's job is to prompt a searching self-examination of culture and belief... – that would have enabled Medea – to take charge of her own thinking, considering duly the available alternatives and selecting, from them, the one that is best' therefore suspending her habitual response (p. 328). This interpretation of Seneca's intention to invite his audience to self-reflect accords with my view of his purpose.

⁶⁷⁶ Cf. *Med.* lines 895ff., 926ff., 937ff., 988-9.

mainly used in the *meditatio* of the *proficiens* (cf. *Ep.* 31.8; 123.10) but also to indicate conflict and instability (*pugnam et inconstantiam*) and the discord which accompanies vices (*dissident vitia*) compared with the state of a harmonious soul (*Vit. beat.* 8.6).⁶⁷⁷

Medea is impulsive in the murder of her brother as she kills him and scatters his limbs across the sea as she sails away from Colchis without considering alternative actions (*Med.* lines 911ff.). In comparison, the murders of her children were more considered, with moments of hesitation before carrying out the deed (lines 893-977). Medea has the opportunity to consider how she could respond to the 'injuries' Jason causes. Her self-apostrophe advising herself to follow her '*fertile impulse/felicem impetum*' (line 895) echoes Stoic sentiments expressed elsewhere in Seneca, such as encouraging men to follow their mind's impulse (*Ep.* 31.1).⁶⁷⁸ The difference is that in the *Epistles*, Lucilius is advised to follow his impulse towards goodness (i.e. pursuing reason). Medea lacks a good counsellor to channel her impulse away from what she perceives to be good (i.e. revenge), which is actually contrary to reason. Reason fails to prevail in Medea, raising questions over whether the technique of delay has universal success. Its failure is not in the method itself, but the individual not receiving guidance and not applying delay to achieve a positive outcome in terms of resolving a confrontational situation. Medea had no genuine intention to extirpate *ira*, particularly when she discovered Jason has no wish for reconciliation. Indeed, his rejection serves to increase her rage and prompts her to accelerate and magnify her revenge plans and any moments of hesitation are used to plot revenge.

Evidently Medea is incapable of helping herself, but the social responsibility expected of Stoicism raises the issue of who in the play could and should

⁶⁷⁷ In addition, there are stylistic reasons why Medea is presented in this way. Self-questioning and sudden hesitation prior to action is a common theme in Senecan and Republican tragedy which may suggest that Seneca was using these devices to conform with contemporary style cf. *Ag.* line 228; *HF* line 996; *HO.* lines 307-11; *Oct.* lines 73-4, 960; *Oed.* lines 926, 952, 1024; *Phaed.* line 425; *Phoen.* line 30; Boyle (2014) pp. 352-3. Cf. Littlewood (2004) pp. 214-5.

⁶⁷⁸ Cf. Boyle (2014) p. 353.

have helped her. The most obvious person is her confidante the Nurse, as well as Creon who as ruler has a responsibility to all his citizens. In addition, Jason should have been supportive because of their previous intimacy and should have supported her during their relationship, for example with her previous outburst of irrationality which led to the murder of her brother. It is also reasonable to assume that the Corinthians, if they were Stoics, would be seeking to reform Medea. While the Nurse has dutifully listened to her mistress' plight (*Med.* lines 568-9), Medea is offered empty advice in that she is simply told to 'calm down' but this is to allow her vengeance to be more successful and not to alleviate her angry feelings (lines 150-5). The Nurse repeats similar sentiments (cf. lines 157-8, 381, 425-6) and Jason orders her to be calm (cf. lines 506-7, 557-9), as well as encouraging rational thought (lines 537-8).⁶⁷⁹ Nowhere is Medea told exactly how to do this. The closest detailed advice is offered by the Nurse when she recommends acceptance and adaptation (lines 174-5).

Although she fails to provide helpful details about how her mistress should change and serves only to fuel Medea's criminality, the Nurse's intentions are honourable. Like all the characters in the play, the Nurse is terrified of Medea: '*My soul quivers with fear; great disaster looms — Pauet animus, horret: magna perniciēs adest*' (*Med.* line 670). As it is a passion caused by the incorrect ascription of value to externals and the mistaken belief that other people can cause them harm, Stoics do not permit fear which means that they would not consider the Nurse to be following their philosophical belief system because anything the protagonist says or does is ultimately irrelevant to the other characters' living well. The Stoics advise the *constantia*, caution instead, which Medea captures in her *sententia*: '*Who can hope for nothing should despair of nothing — Qui nil potest sperare, desperet nihil*' (line 163).⁶⁸⁰ Seneca confirms this view elsewhere when he quotes the Stoic Hecato: '*Cease to hope and you will cease to fear —*

⁶⁷⁹ Cf. Boyle (1997) p. 157. While Jason does not behave in a particularly Stoic fashion, his advice here is reminiscent of Stoic guidance to extirpate passion and act according to reason rather than emotive impulse.

⁶⁸⁰ For Seneca's *sententiae*, see p. 45.

desines timere si sperare desieris' (Ep. 5.7). However, none of the characters in *Medea* adopt this sensible advice or recognise the existence of or positive implications from *constantiae* over passions.

Medea's greatest problem is her passions and attempts to manage them with Stoic techniques would be the most beneficial application of philosophy. If she could analyse her feelings correctly by establishing their causes she would not be carried away by *adfectus*. Rather than living impulsively, she could delay her response and use the time to reflect on the most constructive way of responding. By practising spiritual exercises and with the community to help her in this reflection, she would realise that, while Jason's abandonment was a negative experience, with appropriate planning she could rebuild her life without him. Many people before and afterwards, when they have limited their mourning period for the loss of their partner, have moved on to meet someone new or to re-establish themselves without other people. Medea could consider the various motives for Jason's departure and she ought to have taken responsibility for some of the causes, rather than blaming other people, such as Creon and later fortune (cf. *Med.* lines 143, 219ff.). She could have learnt that she has control only of her mental activities, but not events, which would alleviate the frustration of not being able to create the desired outcome every time.

If Medea saw God as an embodiment of reason, rather than appealing to the Olympian divinities, she would realise she has a degree of influence over her fated life through the decisions she makes. By letting go of the past and relinquishing her focus on her mythological status, Medea could appreciate and live in the present for a more fulfilling life. Instead of defining herself as a wife, which is no longer a role she can fulfil, she could focus on being a good, protective mother. With a lower self-opinion and greater humility, she could hold a more realistic value system. This would make her a better person and one who is less disposed to disappointment and therefore anger. She could improve her relationships with other people by becoming less self-centred and by recognising that she is a small part of the greater cosmos. By being more receptive to assistance and advice, Medea

could benefit from guidance and support from other people to help her deal with her difficult situation. The problem in any anger therapy is that anger is self-righteous in the belief it is right to avenge injury and desires satisfaction, not treatment. This is why Medea does not accept any advice given to placate her as is the fact that the irrationality of anger is such that it is deaf to rational persuasion (3.39.2).

She is suffering great loss from a variety of sources and it is no wonder her grief is so raw (cf. *Med.* lines 116-22).⁶⁸¹ She has little left for which to be grateful and she is too emotional to be able to reason about her misfortune. However, Medea would struggle to follow the advice that Seneca offers for loss (Cf. *Ep.* 63; 99; *Helv.*; *Marc.*) because the after-life haunts her when she has hallucinatory visions of her brother's ghost (lines 963-5). For any therapy to work, an individual must want to improve. Medea definitely wants to change her situation; however, she refuses to accept advice and does not want therapy to improve her internal disposition. She is determined to seek revenge with disastrous consequences, without having the restoration of her mental stability as her primary goal.

Medea is conscious of her foreignness. Having come from an inhospitable land after the attack by the Argonauts, she transfers this to hostility towards the Corinthians (*Med.* lines 42-3) and can be characterised by her confrontation and criminality. Had she been able to see that individuals are part of a whole, she may have felt less threatened and have behaved less aggressively. Similarly, had the other characters in the play taken a brotherhood view rather than a narrow polis-interest (which is often characterised by fear of people outside their immediate network who are perceived as posing a threat to their well-being), they may have been more

⁶⁸¹ Nussbaum (1994) draws attention to the times in the play where 'grief' and 'anger' are used synonymously to show the closeness of passions, citing as examples *Med.* lines 445-6, where Jason comments about the grief on Medea's face and lines 943-4 where there is an interchange of the terms (p. 451). The connection between the two terms is made evident when '*dolor*' is translated as 'being wounded' capturing the sense of a feeling of resentment which leads to anger (p. 451 n. 16). Here, Seneca is indicating the close relation between different feelings and their manifestation according to the nature of the perceived injury.

supportive and tolerant towards Medea. Based on her treatment by other people, she can be seen as a vulnerable, naïve, impressionable maiden, who was attracted to an ostentatious and crafty man from whom she anticipated special treatment in reward for her efforts. The banishment of Jason proposed in her first monologue seems fitting and acceptable (lines 19ff.). If the audience adopts this compassionate interpretation and perhaps one which is not wholly Stoic in the sense that more sympathy is applied than the appropriate concern for others that the School demands, the justice in Medea's anger can be seen, despite its horror, and may go as far as believing that love and loyalty (or rather loss of it) makes women criminals.⁶⁸² Taking a Stoic view of Medea's situation an audience could recognise the need and their responsibility to assist her by redirecting her energies towards assuming reason as a guide and correcting her mistaken evaluation of her situation.

Saving Atreus

Moving on to Atreus, evidence of him practising Stoic methods and whether he could be 'saved' by philosophy can be considered. He shares many of the flaws of Medea. Seneca presents his characters in Roman terms and gives Atreus the kind of eloquence and wit which Roman youths of high status acquired from attending rhetoric classes.⁶⁸³ Atreus shows no evidence of practising spiritual exercises, nor any interest in introspection for positive ends, although he is to some degree self-aware, as his self-identification as a tyrant (*Thy.* line 177) and his rejoicing in his own excessive anger shows.⁶⁸⁴ When he addresses himself or refers to himself in the third person, it is to motivate destructive action, not for self-analysis

⁶⁸² Benton (2003) recognises that Medea's use of the passive voice suggests that 'being a criminal is not in her nature; it is something Jason has taught her' (p. 277 evidenced in her defence to Creon, *Med.* lines 276-80). This arguably over-generous view overlooks Medea's famed propensity for violence for which it is questionable whether Jason can be held accountable.

⁶⁸³ The mockery of Thyestes can arouse mixed responses in the audience. Seneca proposes that provocative situations are responded to with laughter (3.37.3. Cf. 2.10.5, 3.6.3, 3.11.2) and wit can be used to cope with a tyrant (3.15.3). However, Thyestes is incapable of this because he does not grasp Atreus' regular double-entendres and cannibalistic innuendo, particularly during the 'festive banquet' of cannibalism (cf. *Thy.* lines 919ff.): these serve only to make Thyestes' plight comic cf. Meltzer (1988) pp. 311, 323-4. For dramatic irony and dark humour in *Thyestes*, see Mader (1998), (2002) and (2003).

⁶⁸⁴ For Atreus' attitude to ruling, see p. 183.

(cf. lines 176ff., 192ff., 280ff.). To be a humane leader, let alone a Stoic one, Atreus' value system requires immediate modification, yet there is neither the inclination nor likelihood of this happening in the ruler. Far from not inviting anger, Atreus pursues it, wanting to become more savage when he first feels stirrings in his heart (lines 252-4), a craving that is soon satisfied when his fury intensifies (lines 260-2).⁶⁸⁵ According to mythology, initially Atreus responded to the betrayal of his brother by usurping his power after summoning a civil war and he has a strong propensity towards aggression.

A considerable amount of time has elapsed during Thyestes' exile; however, the ensuing events of the play imply that this time was not spent defusing Atreus' anger. Instead it exacerbated his grievances, making him increasingly determined to complete his revenge on his brother's return (*Thy.* lines 176ff.). Atreus is not carried away by passions in the conventional sense because the murders of his nephews are calculated (lines 192-5. Cf. lines 241-3, 249-54, 324-30) apart from a fleeting delay which he responds to by urging courage (lines 283-4). Such delays and abrupt loss of nerve can be linked with the Stoic views about the fluctuation of *adfectus* where passion fades quickly compared with reason which is 'well-balanced/*aequalis est*' (1.17.4. Cf. lines 283-4).⁶⁸⁶ However, Atreus' anger exists for the duration of the play, with little evidence of its abatement. Initially, Atreus is afraid of his brother's capabilities because he is nervous about his regal position (lines 201ff.), in the same way Thyestes fears Atreus' intentions (cf. lines 412ff., 434ff., 473ff.): both men suffer greater anxiety than the caution which the Stoics allow. If they were aware of and had reconsidered the real impact of other people's behaviour on them, they would have realised that, according to a Stoic perspective, they could not be truly harmed. By the end of the play Atreus fears nothing (lines 703ff. Cf. line 888); this is not because he is a Sage or a true king (lines 388-90), but because of the change in circumstances, so that the threat to his rule has been removed. Similarly, at the play's closure Atreus will desire nothing, not due to self-sufficiency but because his desires have been largely fulfilled by

⁶⁸⁵ For Atreus' appetite, see p. 209.

⁶⁸⁶ Cf. Tarrant (1985) p. 131.

successfully taking revenge (lines 888-9). Atreus is not rescuable from himself by other characters' support, not only because the advice offered to him relates to kingship alone rather than managing his passions. He is dismissive of the Satelles' challenge to his ruling style and rejects the alternative of being a good and fair king offered by the Minster in his attempt to apply Stoic therapy, indicating that Atreus would not be receptive to changing his values or personality (cf. lines 205ff.).

Could Stoicism have helped Atreus? Atreus' rage is his greatest flaw. If he could control his feelings, innocent people, such as his citizens and family, would have been saved from their anxiety, distress and pain. Introspection could improve him as a person, help him to understand the reality of his situation and teach him what is within his true sphere of control. He could then take responsibility for his role in his wife's betrayal which may have mitigated his anger and its ensuing destruction. More widely, instead of trying to control his subjects and everything around him, Atreus would be a better ruler if he was not governed by passions such as anger and greed and instead sought to protect his state and act for the greater good, rather than solely for his ends, enabling him to fulfil his prescribed role correctly by following reason. He could benefit from listening to the advice of other people and understand the sort of ruler that they wish to have. Instead of arrogantly believing he has banished the deities, he should embrace the divine spirit within all men, adopt its reasoning power and see that the true God is an embodiment of reason which facilitates virtue.

Evidently, Medea and Atreus are not responsive to treatment for their passions. This is not due to the defectiveness of the philosophical techniques. It serves to demonstrate the requirement from the individual to want to change. It could be considered unreasonable to expect tragic characters to want to change or wholly embrace philosophical ideals, even though they require it most. Despite hopes as the plays progress that the murders of children will not happen, even though dramatic plot knowledge means the audience knows they must, character improvement would be

contrary to the generic requirements of tragedies which depend on individuals making fundamental mistakes, to create the dramatic tension necessary for a successful play and to arouse a powerful response in the audience. However, any perceived allusions to Stoicism in the plays are not meaningless. The disastrous personalities are established not only for entertainment but also for the audience's education in how to respond to confrontational situations and to people who cause injury and how to manage feelings to prevent them from developing into passions. Medea and Atreus represent the dark side of humanity, mirror universal human failings and perennial problems men face on an individual and social level. Seneca's presentation of his characters brings the individuals alive and draws the audience into the play, making them relate to the characters as they would to real people.

The audience leaves the plays emotionally and intellectually exhausted, having suffered with the characters and feeling sentiments such as regret that Stoic methods did not help the protagonists because they were not all tried or applied or properly implemented, at the same time as being revitalised by the inspired self-reflection. From the characters' mistakes and atrocities, the importance of extirpating passions is learnt, and the audience becomes aware that there are alternative ways of thinking and living to prevent them from 'becoming' Medea or Atreus. Tragic characters will not change: real people can and according to Seneca, should strive to adopt a Stoic way of life. Adopted as a life-style rather than a quick-fix solution, the value of Stoicism is apparent, because if practised regularly an individual would not allow himself to become victim to the sort of scenarios in these plays. The plays also raise issues of the sort of environment one needs to be in so as to successfully implement these sorts of strategies, for instance being associated with good natured people who guide and support others in seeking virtue and perfecting reason. In this respect, tragedy provides much more than theatrical entertainment: plays can prompt life-changing self-realisation in the audience. Seneca is successful in creating compelling and lasting dramas which are as relevant now as they were at the time of their composition.

Conclusion

This thesis sought to answer a series of questions relating to the nature and management of anger in relation to Seneca's presentation of the passion across the genres in which he writes. The final chapter draws together conclusions about Seneca's place in the Stoic tradition and the extent to which anger's management depends on Stoic theory. It analyses his educative purpose in writing by considering how useful the selected texts are in teaching his reader and audience about anger. I end with the argument that the correct application of Stoic philosophy facilitates the ability to correct erroneous evaluative judgements, thus removing passions, and enables a virtuous life of *tranquillitas* which ought to be pursued by mankind.

How orthodox is Seneca?

Having analysed the varied Stoic attitudes towards passions in Chapter One, I conclude that Seneca is largely orthodox in his thinking. This is because of his monism, his belief that the soul is corporeal and the agreement that there is an innate divine spirit in humans. He agrees that the *summum bonum* depends on pursuing virtue and following nature without dependence on externals or fate. He accepts the four primary passions as appetite, fear, distress and pleasure and follows Zeno's temporal sequence of the formation of passions.

In his division of the formation of anger into stages, Seneca can be interpreted to be resolving the conflict between Zeno and Chrysippus about the role of judgements in passions, by selecting parts of their respective arguments to formulate his own without contradicting either of his predecessors' views.⁶⁸⁷ He agrees that assent is voluntary, that there are two causes for action in that for anger to arise there is the need for assent to the impression of injury and the desire to avenge. He also accepts from Chrysippus the extent of man's sphere of control and that their lack of

⁶⁸⁷ For the role of judgement in passions, see pp. 57, 62, 66-70.

reasoning exempts animals from passions. Seneca agrees that passions are instances of insanity and like Chrysippus, among other thinkers, that philosophy is medicine for the soul. He shares Cleanthes' view of the educative value of poetry but also shares the concern of other Stoics that it corrupts if there is no moral purpose. Seneca advocates the forms of Stoic lessons, such as *decreta*, *praecepta*, lectures, reading texts, letter-writing and keeping good company at the same time as agreeing with Posidonius about the importance of examining *adfectus* to understand good and evil. He takes a Stoic world view of men as citizens of the universe, favours a Stoic God who acts as creator, protector and ruler governed by reason and agrees with Chrysippus and Posidonius that only the Sage is a true king. These views illustrate how Seneca embraces many of the views of early Stoic thinkers.

Posidonius' influence is most evident in Seneca's proposed therapies as both consider methods in terms of their educative and supervisory nature. They also agree about how the constitutive elements and environment affect character in a similar way to Chrysippus and Aristotle's arguments. Indeed, Seneca is selective in his choice of Stoic doctrines, rejecting much of their logic and syllogisms, because he believes that man's responsibility for self-improvement entails moulding his own opinion.⁶⁸⁸ This view provides opportunity for Seneca to contribute new ideas to the school's doctrines. For instance, he is innovative in emphasising the role of *voluntas* in the formation of anger, he develops comprehensive concepts about pre-passions from Chrysippus, Posidonius and the Epicureans and extends the concept of the *proficiens* also discussed in Posidonius. By separating the formation of passions into stages, he reconciles the apparent contradictions found in Zeno and Chrysippus, thus creating a more cohesive theory. I interpret these contributions not so much as a rejection of earlier Stoic theories but as a means to assimilate different ways of thinking.

⁶⁸⁸ For Seneca's rejection of some Stoic doctrines, see pp. 26ff.

In *De Ira*, Seneca introduces Aristotelian and Epicurean ideas largely to refute them in favour of a Stoic perspective about the nature of anger, in which he is very persuasive. For instance, he rejects the other two schools' beliefs that anger is necessary for self-preservation and involves pleasure because he prefers the Stoic explanation that injury should be seen as indifferent to man's wellbeing and that pleasure and anger are separate passions. Seneca also rejects the idea that passions can be moderate, as argued by Posidonius and Aristotle, or that there are two types of anger as the Epicureans propose: instead he promotes the orthodox view that passions are absolute. However, he agrees with the other schools that there is a relation between injury and anger which is also proposed by the early Stoa. While there is evidence of Epicurean and other philosophical schools in his writing, Seneca's views predominately represent a Stoic perspective, suggesting he believes that their way of thinking is most suited to his purpose of educating people in virtue and vice. This is based on his personal experience and the shared belief that the disruption to reason which vices such as anger cause is curable and *adfectus* can be replaced by *constantiae*.⁶⁸⁹

How 'Stoic' are Seneca's anger management techniques?

The cognitive element of *adfectus* which Seneca accepts from Stoicism and the subjectivity of anger mean that it is possible to alleviate the troubles it causes, if evaluations are reconsidered and impressions are rationally and correctly judged. This proposed 'solution' is reasonable and achievable when the methods are known and correctly applied. Seneca's aim in *De Ira* is to advise how not to become angry and not to do wrong if angry. He teaches that men can control whether they become angry by identifying pre-passions and amending perceptions and attitudes through selecting methods which best suit their needs to prevent anger from arising.

While a philosophically-based education would best prepare men for adulthood, in early education the measures which Seneca proposes such

⁶⁸⁹ For Seneca's motivation for promoting Stoicism, see pp. 17-23.

as training children not to respond in provocative situations, teaching that emotional behaviour does not produce results, and following good examples are methods which non-philosophical parents and communities can provide.⁶⁹⁰ In adulthood, the role of philosophy is more apparent in Seneca's advice, such as internalising Stoic principles to form one's own principles by which to live.⁶⁹¹ Yet even here, in keeping the company of wise men, even if the sole purpose is not to meditate on virtue and perfect reason, men can learn how to better behave simply by following good examples. The spiritual exercises Seneca recommends originate from philosophy but seen from a different angle, reflection on one's behaviour and thoughts does not necessarily depend on having a philosophical inclination.⁶⁹² For instance, while understanding the Stoic psychology of action and the cause and effect of anger makes sense of the exercises and is likely to produce more sustainable changes, with the basic inclination to improve one's thinking and be accountable for one's action, self-reflection in itself could be sufficient for worthier behaviour.

Changing life-style habits and behaviour, which involves taking part in aesthetic activities which do not provoke passions, and the correct selection of company can also be successful in non-philosophers because they are methods which are comparatively easy to carry out.⁶⁹³ Making changes to what is valued and rejecting externals on a simple non-philosophical level could be interpreted to mean rejecting materialism. However, understanding a Stoic categorisation of externals and recognising indifferents makes valuing things simpler because it provides guidance relating to correct selection and an understanding of why it is beneficial and necessary to the *summum bonum*.⁶⁹⁴ Perhaps the most complicated technique for curing passions is changing attitudes towards other people when a Stoic perspective is taken. The notions of true friendship being restricted to the wise and accepting the loss of people as indifferents would be hard for a

⁶⁹⁰ For childhood education, see pp. 132-3.

⁶⁹¹ For adult education, see pp. 133-4.

⁶⁹² For spiritual exercises, see pp. 134-52.

⁶⁹³ For changes in life-style habits and behaviour, see pp. 152-7.

⁶⁹⁴ For appropriate attitudes towards externals, see pp. 157-9.

non-philosopher to comprehend and accept. Nevertheless, the appeal to *humanitas*, compassion, forgiveness and tolerance which Seneca and Stoicism advocate can be universally applied, and improved social relations can follow without dependency on a Stoic valuation of indifferents.

Seneca's practical guidance which does not depend on understanding Stoic doctrines can be seen in the advice not to invite anger, resist it at its first stages and delay responses. Avoiding provocative scenarios, such as crowds, and ignoring rumours are straightforward and delaying a reaction can be accepted as sensible, even if the concept of withholding assent is not appreciated as the means. The first stage of preventing anger is to prevent it from arising or to stop it from developing by acknowledging and halting feelings when involuntary pre-passions are experienced. While this method is philosophically based, it could be applied from a non-philosophical basis if understood, not in terms of fluctuations of the soul but as changes in sensations which, with practice, can be identified as warning signs for future more disruptive responses. For example, one might realise that an increased sensation of heat in the chest may be an indication of angry feelings brewing without interpreting that sensation in Stoic terms. Helping to cure other people's anger can be accepted as a communal responsibility and understanding the need to remove anger for social benefit can be accepted without a philosophical context as the negative consequences of *ira* are easily identifiable.⁶⁹⁵ Supporting one's friends by removing them from inflammatory situations and knowing them sufficiently well to identify the signs of anger as they arise are practical means which do not require a knowledge of Stoicism. However, efforts such as re-education in terms of ascribing value would require philosophical input in terms of explaining the reasons for reactions and facilitating changes.

This analysis of Seneca's cures has demonstrated that they are sufficiently universal and varied that methods can be selected which are appropriate to an individual's circumstances whether he takes a Stoic outlook or not and

⁶⁹⁵ For curing other people, see pp. 170-3.

even without philosophical inclinations, anger can be prevented. However, a Stoic perspective yields better and more sustainable results because it facilitates an understanding of the world, of what to do and why. For example, men with a tendency to jump to conclusions would benefit from delaying their reaction and reflecting on the initial impression. People who are hyper-sensitive to any criticism by other people would profit from remembering what is in their control and that other people's opinions do not really affect their well-being. Thoroughly 'knowing ourselves' through the spiritual exercises, is a successful way of learning one's vulnerabilities and how to address these.

The educational value of Senecan philosophy

Having acknowledged that Seneca has varied reasons for incorporating Stoic themes in his writing, because this research has focused on his moral purpose of encouraging self-improvement, I now consider the educative role of Seneca's works in teaching his readers and audiences about virtue and vice and reason versus passion by drawing on what appear to be the intended responses to his lessons. Conscious of the need to address human vice and the importance of promoting virtuous living, Seneca presents himself as man's teacher, guide and doctor to motivate self-improvement and to persuade his readers and audience to change their opinions. The selected texts all communicate important details about the problems of passions and in doing so contribute to the understanding of their nature. *De Ira* most obviously reveals Seneca's views about anger, which are reinforced through references to *ira* in *De Clementia* and his dramas illustrate the catastrophic consequences of anger. In his prose, Seneca dispels the common myths surrounding anger and uses *exempla* and descriptions to illustrate the wide-spread destruction it causes confirming the requirement to remove *ira*. He teaches that man can control whether he becomes angry through a variety of techniques, which when properly applied can remove it altogether.⁶⁹⁶

⁶⁹⁶ Cf. Chapter Three *passim*.

By placing his argument in a philosophical framework that is largely Stoic, Seneca presents explanations of why and how anger can be removed. However, the genres in which he writes may affect the ease with which this can be achieved. The *Epistles* and moral essays offer sensible advice for moral improvement and clear directions for executing Stoicism, to the extent that they include rhetorical questions and interlocutors who raise concerns his reader may wish to voice.⁶⁹⁷ The references to *humanitas* which permeate each page of *De Ira* and *De Clementia* evoke thoughtfulness about how one should respond to slights, the ethical considerations behind punishment, what it is to be human, how to be humane and how to cultivate a perfect soul. These texts promote Stoic living as a means of obtaining virtue, the highest and only true good. The wide influence across the centuries confirms the value of *De Ira* and *De Clementia*, not only as pieces of literature but as moral essays providing guidance for rulers and individuals designed to have a positive influence on the way humans co-exist.⁶⁹⁸

In comparison with the prose works, *Medea* and *Thyestes* do not directly sermonise, nor should they be expected to do so, though there are philosophical themes implied in characters' speeches and behaviours as has been identified in Chapter Four. In response to the anti-Stoic interpretation of Seneca's drama, I argue that, while there are alternative ways of viewing his plays, evidence in the texts suggests that they should be read as inviting reflection in the audience. Seneca's dramas demand that, alongside being entertained, through witnessing the disastrous consequences of not addressing passions, his audience appraise their behaviours to address personal weaknesses and avoid falling into the same problems as his disturbed characters. In this respect, the characters' errors and outrages as *mala exempla* serve to prompt alternative ways in our thinking and living and this is one of the major reasons why Seneca employs philosophical attitudes in his dramas. By encouraging his audience to

⁶⁹⁷For the use of such declamatory devices, see pp. 42-7.

⁶⁹⁸For the influence of *De Ira*, see Cooper and Procopé (1995) pp. xxxi-ii. For the impact of *De Clementia* on future authors, see Braund (2009) pp. 77-86.

change how they view the world and to have an increased self-awareness after reading or watching the plays, Seneca is promoting Stoicism and is correct to do so if his programme is to re-educate his readers and audience in virtue and vice because the school offers comprehensive ways to understand these concepts.

The practical nature of Stoic philosophy is such that it provides guidance for behaviour when an individual assimilates the doctrines and applies them to his life. By focusing on the perfection of reason, which for Stoics is man's *telos*, there is a clear goal to achieve. Attaining the *summum bonum* is facilitated by accepting doctrines such as *secundum naturam*, *officia*, *oikeiosis* and by emulating the paradigm of the Sage. These concepts make sense of why men should think and act in a particular way which makes Stoicism appealing. Stoic philosophy also offers us a form of therapy concerned with coping with, preparing for and avoiding pain, as well as learning to accept fate and commanding what is within human control.⁶⁹⁹ It provides man with a sense of purpose and identity in a world larger than the individual. While Stoicism may not be a cure for severe mental health problems, which require professional medical attention, it offers an excellent prescription for cognitive and emotional ailments and provides accessible advice for living well. In my view, Seneca is right to believe that Stoicism is an appropriate way to secure a virtuous life of *tranquillitas* and one which is devoid of anger.

⁶⁹⁹Cf. Sandbach (1975) p. 17; Collins (2009) pp. 46, 48.

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