

# *The Sovereign Person in Senecan Political Theory*

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THE LONGEST, MOST LUCID, AND EASILY THE MOST ELOQUENT STATEMENT of sovereign power that classical antiquity bequeathed to subsequent political theory is provided by the sovereign *princeps* himself as he steps forward to introduce himself to a postrevolutionary Roman audience in the prologue of Seneca's *De clementia*:

Have I, of all mortals, found favour with the gods and been chosen to act on earth in their stead? I am the judge with power of life and death over nations, I have the fate and condition of everyone in my hands. All dispensations of fortune to mortals are made through pronouncements on my lips. My verdict is what gives people and cities cause to rejoice. No region anywhere flourishes but by my will and favour. These swords in their countless thousands, sheathed through the peace that I bring, will be drawn at my nod. The extermination or banishment of nations, the granting or loss of their liberty, the enslavement of kings or their coronation, the destruction or rise of cities—all this comes under my jurisdiction. Such is the extent of my power. Yet I have not been driven to unjust punishment by anger or youthful impulse, nor by the rashness and obstinacy of men, which wrenches the patience, from even the calmest breasts, nor even by the glory, fearsome but common among those of high command, of parading one's power through terror. My sword has been sheathed, indeed hung away altogether. I have spared to the utmost even the meanest blood. There is no one, whatever else he may lack, who has not the name of man to commend him to my favour. My sternness I conceal, my mercy I hold at the ready. I watch over myself as though the laws, which I have summoned from decay and darkness into the light, will call me to account. I have been touched by the first flush of one person's youthfulness, by another's extreme old age. I have granted pardon to one man because of his high position, to another because of his low estate. Whenever I could find no other ground for pity, I have shown



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mercy to myself. This very day, should the gods demand it, I can render account for the whole human race.”

This you can say boldly out loud, Caesar . . .<sup>1</sup>

Here, then—in sharp contradistinction to the terse and fragmented comments on the same subject in the *Corpus iuris*—is an extraordinarily exalted enunciation of that “most high, absolute, and perpetual power over the citizens and subjects in a Commonweale” which Bodin famously defines as sovereignty in his *Six livres de la République*.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, when Bodin cites the opening of this passage of *De clementia* in book II of his classic work—“I am the onely man amongst living men, elect and chosen to be the Lieutenant of God on earth: I am the Arbitrator of lyfe and death”—he carefully observes that its account of “soveraigne authoritie” is articulated by “Seneca speaking in the person of Nero his scholler.”<sup>3</sup>

It is well known that the terms of Bodin’s own political theory led him to regard the Roman monarch’s assumption in Seneca’s own day of the kind of sovereign authority that Seneca ascribes to him as wholly illegitimate, “wrested by force from the Senat and people of Rome . . . in right he had it not.”<sup>4</sup> For Bodin, those claims to sovereignty came to acquire a secure legal basis only in the reign of Vespasian, the traditional date of the *lex regia*, which purportedly transferred *summum imperium* from the *populus* to the *princeps*.<sup>5</sup> This understanding was firmly rooted in the famous rubric, attributed to Ulpian early in the *Digest*, that seeks to explain how the *princeps* came to possess the power to make law by reference to a formal delegation of *imperium* and *potestas* by the Roman people: “What the *princeps* decides has the force of statute, as the people, by the royal statute [*lex regia*] which was passed regarding his power, confers on him all its own

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<sup>1</sup> Seneca, *De clementia*, ed. Susanna Braund (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 1.1.2–4: 94–96: “Egone ex omnibus mortalibus placui electusque sum, qui in terris deorum vice fungerer? Ego vitae necisque gentibus arbiter; qualem quisque sortem statumque habeat, in mea manu positum est; quid cuique mortalium Fortuna datum velit, meo ore pronuntiat; ex nostro responso laetitiae causas populi urbesque concipiunt; nulla pars usquam nisi volente propitioque me floret; haec tot milia gladiatorum, quae pax mea comprimit, ad nutum meum stringentur; quas nationes funditus excidi, quas transportari, quibus libertatem dari, quibus eripi, quos reges mancipia fieri quorumque capiti regium circumdari decus oporteat, quae ruant urbes, quae oriantur, mea iuris dictio est. In hac tanta facultate rerum non ira me ad iniqua supplicia compulit, non iuvenilis impetus, non temeritas hominum et contumacia, quae saepe tranquillissimis quoque pectoribus patientiam extorsit, non ipsa ostentandae per terrores potentiae dira, sed frequens magnis imperiis gloria. Conditum, immo constrictum apud me ferrum est, summa parsimonia etiam vilissimi sanguinis; nemo non, cui alia desunt, hominis nomine apud me gratus est. Severitatem abditam, at clementiam in procinctu habeo; sic me custodio tamquam legibus quas ex situ ac tenebris in lucem evocavi rationem redditurus sim. Alterius aetate prima motus sum, alterius ultima; alium dignitati donavi, alium humilitati; quotiens nullam inveneram misericordiae causam, mihi peperci. Hodie dis immortalibus, si a me rationem repetant, adnumerare genus humanum paratus sum.’ Potes hoc, Caesar, audacter praedicare omnia . . .” All translations of *De clementia* (henceforth *Clem.*) are from Seneca, *Moral and Political Essays*, trans. John M. Cooper and J. F. Procopé (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 128–64 (here 128–29). Page references to this translation are given in parentheses.

<sup>2</sup> Jean Bodin, *The Six Bookes of a Commonweale*, trans. Richard Knolles (London, 1606; repr., with apparatus by Kenneth D. Macrae, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1962), 84 (bk. 1, chap. 8). For the insufficiencies of the *Corpus iuris* in this respect, see Franklin’s comments in Jean Bodin, *On Sovereignty*, ed. Julian H. Franklin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), xvi.

<sup>3</sup> Bodin, *Six Bookes*, 221 (bk. 2, chap. 5).

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 98 (bk. 1, chap. 8); for a textual variant with a more precise formulation of this point, see Franklin’s note in Bodin, *On Sovereignty*, 24.

power [*imperium*] and authority [*potestas*].”<sup>6</sup> Here, as David Johnston points out, “Ulpian is using the term *imperium* loosely”: “the people’s transfer of all *imperium* and *potestas* can be reasonably interpreted as a transfer of their sovereignty,” and the underlying logic of the argument is “a democratic legitimation of the emperor by the people.”<sup>7</sup> For all its subsequent historical importance, Ulpian’s gnomic pronouncement on the question of the origins of the power of the *princeps* comes “as close as the jurists ever do to explaining the sovereignty and legitimacy of the emperor [*princeps*].”<sup>8</sup> *De clementia*, on the other hand, provided an immeasurably richer conceptual apparatus with which to legitimate the prince’s *potestas* and *imperium* than that which could be garnered from the few scattered suggestions of the classical jurists. Indeed, its enduring ideological utility to a host of different types of monarchical regimes in western Europe between the twelfth and the seventeenth centuries lay precisely in the fact that the deeply imperious description of sovereign power delivered by the princely *imago* in its proem was accompanied by an impressively robust theory of monarchy that offered a normative account of the new sovereign order under the Roman Principate. That account, however, envisaged no conventional kind of legal transaction as the basis of the formation of the Roman monarchy, but instead made the source of the prince’s political authority an act of divine providence, which had entrusted the requisite powers to his possession on account of his moral capacities. There was thus a limit to the extent to which Bodin could resort to the wider conceptual framework within which Seneca’s sovereign figure was ensconced. But he clearly recognized that Seneca’s depiction of the *princeps* nevertheless bore all the crucial “marks” that he wanted his concept of sovereignty to carry, and he accordingly draws deeply and continuously upon certain sections of *De clementia* throughout his text, appropriating a number of its key precepts and examples in order to flesh out his own account.<sup>9</sup>

As Bodin sees it, the opening monologue of Seneca’s treatise is a depiction of sovereignty; it is articulated by the Roman *princeps*, who claims to be the sole subject of that sovereignty—the only true author, we might say, of sovereign acts; and it is produced by the familiar literary device known as *prosopopeia*, the Greek rhetorical term that Quintilian translates as “*fictiones personarum*,” or the “fashioning of *personae*”: the figure of impersonation.<sup>10</sup> If we step back for a moment from the prince’s speech to see how Seneca starts to set the stage for his princely *persona* in his first few sentences, we can see how his entrance is prepared:

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<sup>6</sup> *The Digest of Justinian*, ed. Theodore Mommsen and Paul Krueger, trans. Alan Watson, 4 vols. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985), 1.1.4, 1 *pr.* (p. 14): “Quod principi placuit, legis habet vigorem: utpote cum lege regia, quae de imperio eius lata est, populus ei et in eum omne suum imperium est potestatem conferat.” I cite the translation in David Johnston, “The Jurists,” in *The Cambridge History of Greek and Roman Political Thought*, ed. Christopher Rowe and Malcolm Schofield (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 624.

<sup>7</sup> Johnston, “The Jurists,” 625.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> For the explicit references (not an exhaustive list), see Bodin, *Six Bookes*, 20 (bk. 1, chap. 4), citing *Clem.* 1.16.2; Bodin, *Six Bookes*, 22 (bk. 1, chap. 4), citing *Clem.* 1.14.3; Bodin, *Six Bookes*, 24 (bk. 1, chap. 4), citing *Clem.* 1.23.1 and 1.15.2–7 (the story of Tarius, misprinted as Tatius in the edition); Bodin, *Six Bookes*, 32 (bk. 1, chap. 5), citing *Clem.* 1.14.2; Bodin, *Six Bookes*, 36 (bk. 1, chap. 5), citing Seneca, *De ira* 3.40.2, but the same story (of Vedius Pollio and the lampreys) is in *Clem.* 1.18.2; Bodin, *Six Bookes*, 221 (bk. 2, chap. 5), citing *Clem.* 1.1.2; Bodin, *Six Bookes*, 426 (bk. 4, chap. 1), citing *Clem.* 1.24.1; Bodin, *Six Bookes*, 512 (bk. 4, chap. 6), citing *Clem.* 1.19.2–3 (the analogy between *princeps* and the king bee). I have been unable to find any discussion of Bodin’s use of the Senecan text.

<sup>10</sup> Quintilian, *The Orator’s Education*, ed. and trans. Donald A. Russell, 5 vols. (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 2001), 4:50 (9.2.29): “*fictiones personarum.*”

I have undertaken to write on the subject of clemency, Nero Caesar, in order to act as a kind of mirror, showing you to yourself on the point as you are of attaining the greatest of pleasures. The true satisfaction from good deeds is, of course, to have done them, and there is no reward worthy of virtue apart from virtue itself. Yet it is enjoyable to inspect and to go through the good state of one's conscience, and then to cast one's eyes on the huge multitude here—quarrelsome, factious, uncontrolled, as likely to run riot for its own as for another's downfall, if it breaks the yoke now on it—and say to oneself:

“Have I of all mortals . . .”<sup>11</sup>

In *De clementia*, the Stoic philosopher is writing in a dual capacity: as former *praeceptor* in the *studia liberalia* to the Roman emperor, Nero Caesar, the young prince to whom the text is addressed in 56, shortly after his accession to the imperial throne; and as Nero's informal political advisor. It is Seneca's use of the word *speculum* in the famous opening line that marks out *De clementia* as the earliest surviving classical example of a text describing itself as a “mirror” for a princely ruler. It is worth pausing to underline this fact, since even the most pioneering parts of the recent historiography of the mirror-for-princes genre persist in asserting that the *speculum* is a medieval literary invention. Seneca's text reappeared in the medieval West in the early ninth century after a very brief disappearance from public view in late antiquity, and its relationship to the *specula* that begin to appear from Carolingian times into the central Middle Ages is uncharted and therefore uncertain. But it is indisputably the case that from the twelfth-century renaissance onward, *De clementia* came to exercise a formative influence upon various forms of princely literature that became explicitly imitative of Seneca's mirror at a rhetorical, literary, and theoretical level.<sup>12</sup>

Bodin's comment picks out a number of conceptual features of Seneca's representation of the prince's speech in the proem of *De clementia* that remained conspicuously—though not continuously—associated during the extensive postclassical life of Senecan political theory. I have brought these characteristics together in the title of this article to designate a single object in Seneca's political philosophy—the sovereign person—whose history I want to place at the center of my investigation in this article. But this entity is a reasonably complex conceptual compound; it consists of parts drawn from various theoretical strands in Seneca's philosophy; and one of the main aspirations of this article is to say something substantially new about how Seneca pulls these elements together in his political theory to present us with a distinctive version of the kind of moral person we encounter elsewhere in his writing. It makes some sense to begin, by way of introduction, by unpacking those principal elements and clearing a path through the relevant historiography, which I undertake in part I. For reasons that I go on to explain, the *persona* whom we have already met in the proem incorporates Seneca's entire argument—he functions, in fact, as an extremely elegant summary of it—and some initial familiarity with the terms of his declaration is worth cultivating before wading out into the depths of the theory and its history. But the initial textual division in the article is also designed to segregate a certain amount of con-

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<sup>11</sup> Seneca, *Clem.* 1.1.1-2: 94 (128): “Scribere de clementia, Nero Caesar, institui, ut quodam modo speculi vice fungerer et te tibi ostenderem perventurum ad voluptatem maximam omnium. Quamvis enim recte factorum verus fructus sit fecisse nec ullum virtutum pretium dignum illis extra ipsas sit, iuvat inspicere et circumire bonam conscientiam, tum immittere oculos in hanc immensam multitudinem discordem, seditiosam, impotentem, in perniciem alienam suamque pariter exultaturam sic hoc iugum fregerit \*\*\* , <et> loqui secum: ‘Egone ex omnibus mortalibus...’”

<sup>12</sup> See Peter Stacey, *Roman Monarchy and the Renaissance Prince* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

textual work from my analysis of the theory of *De clementia* itself, so that readers less concerned with the shape of the contribution I am trying to make to the field of classical political theory can obtain a cleaner run through Seneca's political argument by simply skipping part I. In part II, I examine Seneca's construction of the sovereign *persona*. In part III, I discuss some aspects of its postclassical historical fortunes.

The basic point of the article is to examine the historical life of a classical political language about *imperium* that advanced the sovereign claims of the *princeps* by cultivating a series of beliefs about persons, bodies, and their interrelation in profoundly moral and psychological terms. In so doing, I want to reassess a single claim about the historical character of sovereign power that finds its clearest expression in the work of Foucault and that—while not exactly wrong—is sometimes reiterated so flatly that it serves, I think, to constrict our vision of the historical formation of sovereign orders in western European society from the medieval to the early-modern period. Behind the sovereign state, as we well know, lies the figure of the *princeps*; and notwithstanding the eclipse of the latter by the fiction of the former in the early-modern period, Foucault observed that political theory “has never ceased to be obsessed with the person of the sovereign” at some deeper conceptual level.<sup>13</sup> But Foucault saw that obsession manifested in one historically continuous form: as an abiding preoccupation with the relation of the sovereign to law. “Sovereign, law and prohibition formed a system of representation of power,” we are told, “which was extended” in the early-modern period by “theories of right.”<sup>14</sup> In a sketch of how the apparatuses of the early-modern state were formed in order to arbitrate between rival jurisdictional powers, he adds:

Doubtless there was more to this development of great monarchic institutions than a pure and simple juridical edifice. But such was the language of power, the representation it gave of itself[;] and the entire theory of public law that was constructed in the Middle Ages, or reconstructed from Roman law, bears witness to the fact. Law was not simply a weapon skillfully wielded by monarchs; it was the monarchic system's mode of manifestation and the form of its acceptability. In Western societies since the Middle Ages, the exercise of power has always been formulated in terms of law. . . . Western monarchies . . . were constructed as systems of law, they expressed themselves through theories of law and they made their mechanisms of power work in the form of law.<sup>15</sup>

This assessment—as it stands, at least—is in need of qualification in view of the historical role that Renaissance humanist political discourse plays in the genealogy of the sovereign *princeps*. Anyone familiar with the humanist mode of political reflection conducted in those Renaissance texts that are conventionally classified as “mirrors” for princes will find it particularly hard to square the suggestion that law was Renaissance monarchy's principal “mode of manifestation and the form of its acceptability” with the overwhelming concern of this genre to analyze the moral qualities that a monarch must display if he is to be regarded as a true prince. This is not, however, to say that Foucault's point might not be stretched a little to hold basically good for the Senecan way of thinking about *imperium* in *De clementia*, which is fundamental to this literature. On the contrary, Seneca's argument is entirely focused upon the idea of clemency, which is, after

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<sup>13</sup> Michel Foucault, “Truth and Power,” in *Power/Knowledge*, ed. Colin Gordon (New York: Pantheon, 1980), 121. This observation is obviously less true now than when Foucault made it, in part as a consequence of his having made it.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, vol. 1, *An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage, 1978), 87.

all, a legal concept as much as it is a moral virtue. To acquire a belief about the clemency of the prince obviously means acquiring, among other things, a belief about the prince's relation to the law; and this fact was abundantly clear to the humanists. It is also certainly true that the successful cultivation of that particular belief in humanist writing was an invaluable ideological acquisition in that it helped to provide a congenial environment for the kind of legalistic claims emanating from elsewhere—often from princely chanceries, which were frequently staffed by humanists, in fact—about the absolutist nature of a given monarch's power, and possibly in a more concerted manner than we have so far been shown. And there is, furthermore, a way of boning the body of Seneca's theory of monarchy so as to make some of its parts highly serviceable in juridical discourse, a phenomenon that we do indeed observe from the medieval to the early-modern period. But it would be reductive—to the point of becoming positively unhelpful at an analytical level—to proceed to collapse the whole array of Senecan concerns evident in humanist princely ideology (about God and *Fortuna*, about anger and impetuosity, about self-mastery and mastery over others) into a single preoccupation *au fond* with law, at least in the sense that Foucault explicitly intends it in his reference to the role of public law and its relationship to Roman law.

In short, we need to acknowledge a strain of thought about sovereignty that owed a greater debt to Roman philosophy than to Roman jurisprudence. Given that many humanists had some schooling in at least the rudiments of civil law, their reliance on such a philosophical language is not readily explicable in terms of their poverty of knowledge about the resources available to them in the Roman legal tradition. It points instead to an outstanding preference within humanist political culture for an entirely different (though by no means entirely incommensurable) set of discursive tools with which to analyze and defend or reject claims to the types of *potestas* that their princes wielded over them. Nevertheless, the subsequent deployment of Senecan doctrine in postclassical theory may well have come to shape quite profoundly the obsession that Foucault discusses. Seneca's philosophy of clemency is presented in a moral language whose vocabulary and imagery are discernibly pervaded by a legalistic idiom expressive of some very deep metaphysical concerns about the one law that really counts for the Stoics: the natural law of the cosmos. As a consequence of its relationship with this body of thought, princely humanism might plausibly be thought to be inhabited to some degree by a rather inchoate notion of a moral law, which was to become more prominently articulated in time. Finally, there is assuredly something outstandingly Foucauldian to be said—although I am not much interested in saying it myself here—about the fact that Seneca's theory of government is also an extended piece of penology; and to the extent that its contentions become deeply implicated in western European political theory from the medieval period onward, we have to acknowledge that part of its formative historical contribution lies in its inscription upon subsequent political theory of Seneca's insistence that those in positions of power need to cultivate the gentle art of punishing—a position that was to be spectacularly rejected by Machiavelli. In view of this fact, Foucault's summary points become arguably all the more resonant.

There is no question that the sovereign *persona* discussed in parts I and II of my article scuds and bumps in a noticeably scratchy way across the pages of postclassical political thought, its historical life shaped by determinate intellectual and ideological contexts in which it performs various different functions. Elsewhere I have given an outline of the Renaissance history of *De clementia* and of the implication of its theory of monarchy in the formation, from the thirteenth century onward, of a neoclassical language deployed by Renaissance humanists from Petrarch to

Justus Lipsius to legitimate princely government.<sup>16</sup> My aims in part III are limited to the task of supplying further content for the genealogy of the person at the heart of this ideology in two main areas. One advantage of examining the theoretical construction of the sovereign figure in detail in parts I and II is that it becomes easier to explain why the contentions of Seneca's theory came to be deployed for centuries not only in the subsequent *speculum principis* genre but also in a much wider and more theoretically diverse body of political literature, including an important strand of absolutist legal thought that runs from the medieval to the early-modern period and that can be seen, to some extent, to culminate in Bodin's work. I begin part III by commenting on this particular theoretical arc, which deserves a much fuller investigation than I can provide. But the greater part of this section is mainly an exploration of the development from Petrarch onward of one particular aspect of humanist political thought in which the conceptual connection established in Seneca's theory between the prince's claims to sovereignty and his relationship to *Fortuna* is picked up and greatly magnified by Petrarch and his followers. The moral of this part of the Senecan story as it is retold by the humanists requires greater attention than I have so far given it. It elaborates a concern about the mental state of the monarch in imagery drawn from Seneca's depiction of an inviolable sovereign psyche, a princely *mens* impervious to the slings and arrows of a famously belligerent moral opponent said to preside over a realm all of her own, and its basic contention is that true princes must never find themselves subjects within the kingdom of *Fortuna*. Although the outline of this lesson is discernible in much of Petrarch's political writing, I want to draw fresh attention to two of his political texts in particular that proved immensely successful in popularizing this idea: his *De remediis utriusque fortunae*, whose literary identity as a *speculum principis* has not been properly recognized in recent scholarship; and his letter to Niccolò Acciaiuoli, the Grand Seneschal of the Kingdom of Naples in the 1350s, another contribution to the genre, which was almost immediately classified as an *institutio regia* and which circulated among a strikingly large audience well beyond the Kingdom.

After observing how the allegorical terms of the relationship between the prince and *Fortuna* are established in resoundingly Senecan terms in Petrarch's moral and political thought, I turn to investigate how the account subsequently becomes even more embroidered by Florentine humanists. As well as underlining the extensive circulation of these two Petrarchan texts in quattrocento Florence, recent scholars have also begun to identify Seneca's Florentine readers in some detail, and I continue to investigate this intellectual context to show how it provides us with material with which to delineate more crisply the innovative character of Machiavelli's account of the relationship between the prince and *Fortuna* in *Il principe*.<sup>17</sup> One aspect of Machiavelli's assault on the prevailing contentions of the ideology of the Renaissance prince is a systematic and highly subversive reorganization of a set of concepts with which it had become conventional to map out the terms of that relationship. An integral part of this work is the brilliant reconfiguration of the Petrarchan—and ultimately Senecan—imagery with which the traditional relationship had been portrayed; that imagery had come to pervade not only humanist princely theory in general but Florentine political writing in particular in the quattrocento. Machiavelli is moving round some very familiar pieces of a picture to make the relationship function within a moral universe now entirely cut adrift from its providential moorings.

<sup>16</sup> Stacey, *Roman Monarchy*.

<sup>17</sup> I deal with specific parts of this historiography below: but the best evidence of Seneca's popularity in Renaissance Florence is the extensive circulation of his works in manuscripts and early printed books. See Teresa de Robertis and Gianvito Resta, eds., *Seneca: Una vicenda testuale* (Florence: Mandragora, 2004).

## PART I

The fundamental argument of Seneca's political theory can be summarized quite simply. Seneca maintains that the permanent attribution to a single individual of the type of indivisible sovereign authority that he calls *imperium* is a good and just organization of political power if and only if that individual can be demonstrably shown to be a specific type of person: conscientiously committed to the cultivation of a specific typology of virtues by means of an ethical regimen whose content—self-inspection, self-interrogation, self-surveillance—can only be described by recourse to a series of reflexive verbs of the sort that Seneca himself uses in his impersonation of the prince. To underline the fact that Seneca's sovereign commences his long and illustrious political career as a figure of speech is not simply to provide a nicely Nietzschean illustration of the conditions under which the historical genealogies of moral persons so frequently start (not to mention the further, slightly dizzying irony that the person impersonated is—*pudenda origo*—Nero, of all people). Attending to the conjunction of the metaphor of the mirror and the dramatic conceit of impersonation at the outset of the theory provides an insight into the heart of Seneca's project in *De clementia*: the intricate shaping of a self-reflective moral *persona* that must be incorporated by the bearer of political sovereignty if he is to be regarded—and I choose my words carefully here—as legitimate. There is, in other words, the closest possible conceptual relation between the rhetorical structure of Seneca's text and the type of moral subject that it purports. This is the reason we see the prince for the first time in the mirror as an impersonated *imago*, caught in a process of extended self-reflection described by Seneca as an act of conscience.

Nonetheless, Seneca's description of this moral subject in *De clementia* is best understood as the elaboration of a *persona* for reasons that extend well beyond rhetorical considerations. One aim of this article is to pull Seneca's political theory more fully into the present debates about Seneca and the self that initially surfaced in response to Foucault's thesis that Senecan ethics, while constituting the continuation of a deeper philosophical tradition stretching back—as Foucault saw it—to the Platonic *Alcibiades*, nevertheless helped to introduce a distinctively new and quasi-institutionalized focus on the care of the self in the first two centuries AD.<sup>18</sup> These discussions have now culminated in a stimulating volume of papers that originated in a conference on the subject and that clarifies in considerable detail the state of recent scholarship on the question of the Senecan self since Foucault, as well as making a substantial contribution to it.<sup>19</sup> As a consequence, there is no need for more than some fairly clipped remarks here to begin to stake out a position on the question as it pertains to the political theory of *De clementia*. After a couple of centuries of relative neglect, *De clementia* is now beginning to receive closer philosophical attention.<sup>20</sup> Since Miriam Griffin's pioneering work on Seneca in the 1970s, we have long been able to appreciate it as a highly original work that helped to supply the ideological basis for a new

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<sup>18</sup> Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, vol. 3, *The Care of the Self*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage, 1986), esp. pt. 2 ("The Cultivation of the Self"), 39–68; Foucault, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1981–1982*, ed. Frédéric Gros, trans. Graham Burchell (New York: Picador, 2005).

<sup>19</sup> Shadi Bartsch and David Wray, eds., *The Senecan Self* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009). The bibliography is excellent.

<sup>20</sup> Diderot was perhaps the last Enlightenment thinker to take Seneca seriously as a public philosopher. See Edward Andrew, "The Senecan Moment: Patronage and Philosophy in the Eighteenth Century," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 65, no. 2 (April 2004): 277–99.

regime.<sup>21</sup> In the last two decades, the insights of Martha Nussbaum, Matthew Roller, and Brad Inwood, in particular, have opened up the text's philosophical depths immeasurably.<sup>22</sup> And with the publication in 2009 of the first English critical edition of the text in its history, thanks to Susanna Braund, Anglophone scholars are better placed than ever to understand the work, not least as a document of considerable rhetorical sophistication.<sup>23</sup> Still, it is fair to say that Seneca's political theory remains comparatively understudied in the recent renaissance of Senecan studies—in fact, in some ways surprisingly so, since the first and most obvious aspect of its relation to Seneca's emphasis on self-shaping elsewhere in his moral philosophy is its striking deployment of exactly the kind of “vocabulary for designating the different forms that ought to be taken by the care of the self” that Foucault collected into a lexical set: *se formare, sibi vindicare, se facere, se ad studia revocare, sibi applicare, suum fieri, in se recedere, ad se recurrere, secum morari, ad se properare*.<sup>24</sup> We can immediately add some items to this set from Seneca's prologue, where the sovereign prince talks to himself (*loqui secum*), watches over himself (*me custodio*), and even spares himself (*mihi pepercit*) in the act of self-exploration and self-inspection that Seneca so graphically depicts.<sup>25</sup> This aspect of the theory, to repeat, is perfectly encapsulated in Seneca's characterization of the function of his political text as a mirror.

The second, no less obvious but oddly unacknowledged way in which *De clementia* exemplifies the same concern for self-formation in the political sphere that Foucault detected elsewhere in Seneca's moral philosophy is its crucial emphasis on the role of conscience in the construction of the princely person. The particular passage that has excited interest since Foucault recurred to it on numerous occasions is in book 3 of Seneca's *De ira*, in which Seneca sets out, as Inwood notes, an earlier “*prosopopoeia* of self-admonition” at great length to demonstrate what the daily practice of self-interrogation should look like.<sup>26</sup> If we turn back to the prologue of *De clementia*, we can immediately see that Seneca's perfectly clement prince has clearly learned this lesson. His self-examination is not a casual aspect of Seneca's representation at all (later in the text, Seneca will continue to insist upon the need for *bona conscientia*) but a pivotal part of Seneca's legitimation of absolutism: unfettered by the letter of positive, human law and wholly unobliged to any external political agency, Seneca's clement prince is called to account by another form of law entirely—the law of reason—in a mental space that Seneca imaginatively maps out as a courtroom.<sup>27</sup> In so doing, Seneca imports from the earlier to the later text in fairly seamless fashion

<sup>21</sup> M. T. Griffin, *Seneca: A Philosopher in Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976). See also M. T. Griffin, “Seneca and Pliny,” in *The Cambridge History of Greek and Roman Political Thought*, ed. Christopher Rowe and Malcolm Schofield (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 532–58, esp. 532–43.

<sup>22</sup> Martha C. Nussbaum, *The Therapy of Desire* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), 402–38, 481–82, 496–97; Matthew B. Roller, *Constructing Autocracy: Aristocrats and Emperors in Julio-Claudian Rome* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), 182–87, 239–47; Brad Inwood, *Reading Seneca* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 201–23.

<sup>23</sup> See n. 1.

<sup>24</sup> Foucault, *Care of the Self*, 46.

<sup>25</sup> For the text, see n. 1.

<sup>26</sup> Brad Inwood, “Seneca and Self-Assertion,” in *Senecan Self*, ed. Bartsch and Wray, 55 (and for Foucault's use of the passage, see Inwood's comments on 54–55n2). For the latest discussion of this passage and its historiography, see James Ker, “Seneca on Self-Examination: Rereading *On Anger* 3.36,” in *Senecan Self*, ed. Bartsch and Wray, 160–87.

<sup>27</sup> For good and bad conscience in prince and tyrant, see Seneca, *Clem.* 1.13.3, 1.15.5. For the courtroom of conscience, see Paul Veyne, *Seneca*, trans. David Sullivan (New York: Routledge, 2003), 54–55; Inwood, *Reading Seneca*, 210–11; Stacey, *Roman Monarchy*, 42.

the concept of conscience as a tribunal of the mind, presided over by the judge of reason, before which the prince must stand in order to deliver on his promise in the prologue to be able to render *ratio*—a rational account of his government to the gods and to himself. The prince's *bona conscientia* is a condition of his absolute rule, which is why Seneca inserts his description of the latter into a demonstration of the former.

This part of Seneca's political theory is the most conspicuous but not, I think, the only sign that in his account of the sort of mental health that the sovereign prince needs to enjoy in order to be able to wield legitimately the powers accorded to him, Seneca is also drawing upon his own rather distinctive account of Stoic psychology that he had laid out in his analysis of anger and how to cure it in *De ira*. This fact points to a tighter theoretical relationship between the two works than we currently envisage.<sup>28</sup> On one level, the overlap is hardly astonishing. Like *De clementia*, *De ira* is written for members of a Roman elite who exercise a form of absolute rule within Roman political and social life: as fathers of sons or as masters of slaves in the household; or (like Novatus, Seneca's brother, to whom the text is dedicated) as governors of subjects in the provinces; or else, ultimately, as the Roman *princeps* himself.<sup>29</sup> Since these positions legally invest their holders with the power of life and death over others, Seneca argues that they demand the greatest degree of self-mastery so that society as a whole avoids the potentially calamitous consequences of inhumane abuses of authority caused by rage. One consequence of this concern is that *De ira* contains a detailed theory of punishment, which is further developed in *De clementia*. Since it is anger that Seneca discerns as the greatest threat to properly rational acts of clemency and that any true sovereign must entirely eliminate from his mind, we find Seneca incorporating into his political theory parts of his analysis and his psychotherapeutic recommendations in *De ira* for dealing with the pathology. But if in the earlier text, Seneca insists on self-interrogation to ensure a degree of self-rule so that reason rather than rage remains master over those wielding varying positions of *potestas* who are not formally required to account for their actions, in *De clementia* the legalistic character of the same psychological apparatus is more sharply defined in order to make a crucial point about the liability of the prince's mind to the dictates of universal reason, which Seneca explicitly calls natural law in the text and which he regards, in orthodox Stoic fashion, as the source of moral obligation.<sup>30</sup>

The prevarications that continue to prevail around calling this mental arena of self-examination what Seneca calls it are not warranted. Foucault's reason for avoiding the word "conscience"—an objection that he himself subsequently ignored repeatedly and that Pierre Hadot also quietly shelved—was that it is "a blanket term" that only serves "to characterize . . . different exercises" in a manner that "misleads and oversimplifies."<sup>31</sup> But this argument seems more than a little back-to-front. It was Foucault who rolled together a series of quite different practices of self-inspection into a singular formation and traced its evolution back to Pythagoras; but in fact, the evidence about the Pythagorean practice, as Inwood underlines, points less to a

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<sup>28</sup> Important discussions of the thematic relationship between *De clementia* and *De ira* are in Nussbaum, *Therapy of Desire*, 402–38; Inwood, *Reading Seneca*, 201–23.

<sup>29</sup> For this context, see Ker, "Seneca on Self-Examination," 161–63.

<sup>30</sup> For clemency and the *lex naturae*, see Seneca, *Clem.* 1.19.1: 126: "Excogitare nemo quicquam poterit quod magis decorum regenti sit quam clementia, quocumque modo is et quocumque iure praepositus ceteris erit. Eo scilicet formosius id esse magnificentiusque fatebimur quo in maiore praestabitur potestate, quam non oportet noxiam esse si ad naturae legem componitur."

<sup>31</sup> For a recent discussion of the relevant passages, see Ker, "Seneca on Self-Examination," 166.

habit of daily spiritual self-review than to a type of memory training that was valued as a means of developing one's character.<sup>32</sup> Seneca himself tells us that he picked up the specific habitual discipline that he is advocating from a more local source: the Roman Stoic Q. Sextius, whose work Seneca probably read and certainly knew through his teachers Papirius Fabianus and Sotion.<sup>33</sup> Although he does not label the practice *conscientia* in *De ira*, his description of it straightforwardly corresponds to his discussions of the same activity of interior inspection not only in *De clementia* but also in his *Epistulae morales*.<sup>34</sup> This fact fully authorizes the decision of Cooper and Procopé to give the relevant passage in *De ira* the subtitle "Examine Your Conscience" in their English edition of the work.<sup>35</sup> If the reluctance to revert to the term is that it subsequently becomes laden with Christian notions of confession and guilt when the idea is transmitted to a moral universe wedded to an entirely different cosmology and psychology, then we are balking at a later development in the history of the concept that any genealogy should be able to handle. In fact, we risk losing sight of one of the important connective filaments in that history, for when the Christian tradition takes over the practice and recharacterizes it, it preserves the notion of conscience as a courtroom. As Hadot has helped to show, the formation of a Christian conscience from Origen onward drew upon various classical materials, and it owed a specific debt to the imaginative conceptualization that we find elaborated by Seneca.<sup>36</sup> By the time it emerges in Aquinas, it has become firmly reattached to thinking about the role of *lex naturalis* in moral considerations. In his *Homily on the Beginning of the Book of Proverbs*, Basil the Great had talked about the "*kriterion physikon*," claiming that "we have within us a certain natural tribunal, by which we tell good from bad"; and in the *Summa*, Aquinas reminds his reader that "Basil says that 'conscience' or *synderesis* 'is the law of our mind,' and this can only be understood as a reference to the natural law."<sup>37</sup> And when Aquinas asks "whether human law binds a man in the court of conscience," one of his responses is that "laws framed by human beings are either just or unjust. If just, they receive the power to bind in the court of conscience from the eternal law from which they are derived."<sup>38</sup>

It is certainly the case, as James Ker notes, that Seneca glides from one metaphor to another—from the language of law to that of accountancy—in his description of the practice.<sup>39</sup> In the prologue to *De clementia*, he does so to capture the idea that as vicegerent of the gods, the prince is a trustee of divine concerns, obliged to keep and render an account of his administra-

<sup>32</sup> Inwood, "Seneca and Self-Assertion," 56; for a reply, see Ker, "Seneca on Self-Examination," 19–70.

<sup>33</sup> Ker, "Seneca on Self-Examination," 166.

<sup>34</sup> See esp. Seneca, *Epistulae morales*, trans. R. M. Gummere, 3 vols. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1917–25), 43.4–5 (vol. 1, p. 286). See G. Molenaar, "Seneca's Use of the Term *Conscientia*," *Mnemosyne* 22, no. 2 (1969): 170–80; B. L. Hijmans Jr., "Conscientia in Seneca: Three Footnotes," *Mnemosyne* 23, no. 2 (1970): 189–92.

<sup>35</sup> Seneca, *Moral and Political Essays*, 110.

<sup>36</sup> Pierre Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life: Spiritual Exercises from Socrates to Foucault*, ed. Arnold Davidson, trans. Michael Chase (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995).

<sup>37</sup> St. Thomas Aquinas, *Political Writings*, ed. and trans. R. W. Dyson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 114 (S.T. IaIIae 94, ob. 2). For Basil the Great's point, see Timothy Potts, ed., *Conscience in Medieval Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 77. Potts omits the Senecan contribution to postclassical conceptions; some discussion is now in Christopher Tillmouth, "Shakespeare's Open Consciences," in "The Renaissance Conscience," ed. Harald E. Braun and Edward Vallance, special issue, *Renaissance Studies* 23, no. 4 (September 2009): 501–15, esp. 503–5.

<sup>38</sup> Aquinas, *Political Writings*, 143 (S.T. IaIIae 96, art. 4).

<sup>39</sup> Ker, "Seneca on Self-Examination," 167.

tion of the world. This additional dimension proved equally attractive to Renaissance humanists, as Anthony Grafton has helped illustrate, and it demonstrates the richness of Seneca's construction.<sup>40</sup> It does not eclipse the fact that Seneca understands the performance of conscience as a matter of often standing corrected before the judge of reason. In Stoic hands, the psyche was easily robust enough to stand up to its own *j'accuse*; feelings like remorse flood into the picture of conscience only after the mind is enfeebled by Christian sin. And it is in any case arguably mistaken to try to disentangle the metaphors. They are inextricably linked in Seneca's argument about the accountability of the absolute *princeps* as the arbiter of life and death who must render *ratio* for all his sovereign acts to God as his lieutenant.

One consequence of observing the deep penetration of precisely those elements of Seneca's moral philosophy that have been taken to constitute the kernel of a distinctively Senecan identity into his theory of monarchy is that the doubts that have been recently voiced about the propriety of proliferating the category of "the Senecan self" become amplified.<sup>41</sup> Virtually every contemporary scholar of Seneca agrees that the self-reflexive language that Seneca repeatedly uses in his description of moral agency helps impart an unprecedented degree of interiority to the moral subject in his philosophy in an undeniably distinctive way. And few now doubt Seneca's capacity for considerable philosophical originality: his theory of first movements in *De ira*, for example, represents an undeniably innovative and influential contribution to Stoic moral psychology, as Richard Sorabji has shown.<sup>42</sup> But it is certainly questionable whether either the form or the content of the conceptual space that Seneca opens up in his depiction of the moral agent is constituted in a sufficiently novel way to warrant the description of a specifically Senecan self.

One way of approaching the question is to work with Anthony Long's formulation that a "philosophy of the self is the conceptualization and history of the individual or person" that picks out "the way in which individual human beings perceive themselves, or what it is for them to have a first-person outlook on the world. . . . The self in this sense is something essentially individual—a uniquely positioned viewer and interlocutor, a being that has interior access of a kind that is not available for anyone else."<sup>43</sup> The suggestion that the later Roman Stoics begin to break with their philosophical ancestry in constituting the essence of a self in terms of just such individual first-person choices is arguably discernible in Foucault's narrative, though the claim is never articulated clearly; it has been advanced more boldly in Charles Taylor's influential *Sources of the Self*, in which certain aspects of Stoic psychology in the work of Seneca and Epictetus (Seneca's use of the word *voluntas*, his theory of first motions in *De ira*, and Epictetus's understanding of *prohairesis*) are lined up in proleptic fashion to constitute a "developing notion of the will," a rather terrifying abstraction that nicely smooths the historical path for Augustine's master concept—still often regarded as the start of the story of modern selfhood.<sup>44</sup> This claim needs very careful handling indeed. Stoicism, like virtually every other Greco-Roman classical philosophy,

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<sup>40</sup> For Alberti's use of the famous passage from *De ira* in *Libri della famiglia*, see Anthony Grafton, *Commerce with the Classics: Ancient Books and Renaissance Readers* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997), 76–77; the same passage is cited at length by Lipsius in book 3 of his *Manuductio ad Stoicam philosophiam*. Both loci are mentioned in Ker, "Seneca on Self-Examination," 160, 186.

<sup>41</sup> Most recently in Inwood, "Seneca and Self-Assertion"; and Christopher Gill, "Seneca and Selfhood: Integration and Disintegration," in *Senecan Self*, ed. Bartsch and Wray, 65–83, 65.

<sup>42</sup> Richard Sorabji, *Emotion and Peace of Mind* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), esp. 66–92.

<sup>43</sup> A. A. Long, *Stoic Studies*, pbk. ed. (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2001), 265.

<sup>44</sup> Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), 137.

managed to cope very well with the world without a concept of the will. In the first place, as Long himself points out, Seneca remains entirely conventional in identifying “the essence of the person with the mind as distinct from the body,” not on any ontological grounds for that distinction (no such grounds existed for Seneca and the Stoics), but in order to isolate the rational faculty as the sole basis of moral considerations; and Seneca is as thoroughly committed as his predecessors to an objective account of moral identity, constructed around adherence to the Stoic conception of reason.<sup>45</sup> Moreover, as Inwood has quite convincingly demonstrated, there is no significant innovation in his mental ontology that can validate the claim that in his work we are in the presence of a new philosophy of the self *stricto sensu*: Seneca remains firmly within his Chrysippean inheritance in continuing to think normatively about the self in terms of the *hēgemonikon*, or unitary rational soul, which defines what it is to be distinctively human.<sup>46</sup>

In fact, if we continue to map out the relevant details of Seneca’s conceptual world along some of the lines suggested by Brad Inwood and Christopher Gill, it may be possible to dispense entirely with the category of the Senecan self, together with the rather nebulous associations now attached to it. We can replace it with an account that is capable of recognizing Seneca’s debts to a set of doctrines firmly established within Stoic ethics while still acknowledging the extent to which the implications of those doctrines are pursued in a direction significantly inflected by some of the more recent and local theoretical preoccupations of Roman Stoicism. To that effect, we need in particular to recall one extremely well-established Stoic philosophical framework to which Seneca’s account of moral agency is conspicuously wedded. From Chrysippus onward, Stoic ethics are conceptualized within a cosmic *polis* comprising humans and gods, bound together by their shared capacity to comprehend, cultivate, and eventually embody the providential and immanent rationality that governs the universe and that Seneca associates with and personifies variously in his writings as “nature,” “providence,” “fate,” “fortune,” “god,” “the gods,” and “Zeus.” This shared capacity to reason is understood by the Stoics as providing humans and gods with the basis for a community since it supplies them with a notion of justice and law. The law by which that community should abide is described as the law of nature, which for the Stoics is simply another way of talking about reason. In *De ira*, Seneca refers to this doctrine of the cosmic city, suggesting that we think in terms of our inhabiting both a “greater city” and a lesser, local one; and in *De otio*, he similarly talks of the existence of two republics: “Let us embrace with our minds two *res publicae*: one great and truly common—in which gods and men are contained, in which we look not to this or that corner, but measure the bounds of our *civitas* with the sun; the other to which the particular circumstances of birth have assigned us.”<sup>47</sup> It is within this universal, objective framework that we need, as Hadot pointed out, to understand the very point of the theory and practice of Senecan self-shaping in all his philosophical works: namely,

<sup>45</sup> A. A. Long, “Seneca on the Self: Why Now?,” in *Senecan Self*, ed. Bartsch and Wray, 24. For soul and body in Stoicism, see also Long, *Stoic Studies*, 224–49.

<sup>46</sup> Inwood, *Reading Seneca*, chap. 5 (“The Will in Seneca”), 132–56; Inwood, “Seneca and Self-Assertion.” The point is also made in Gill, “Seneca and Selfhood.” The same argument applies to Epictetus: as Long indicates to Inwood (“Seneca and Self-Assertion,” 41n3), Epictetus’s philosophy “hardly registers a novel ontology of the mind.”

<sup>47</sup> Seneca, *De otio* 4.1, in Seneca, *Moral Essays*, ed. and trans. John W. Basore, 3 vols. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1928–35), 2:186–88: “Duae res publicae animo complectamur, alteram magnam et vere publicam, qua dii atque homines continentur, in qua non ad hunc angulum respicimus aut ad illum, sed terminos civitatis nostrae cum sole metimur; alteram, cui nos adscripta condicio nascendi.” The translation is from Malcolm Schofield, *The Stoic Idea of the City*, pbk ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 93. For “the greater city,” see also *De ira* 2.31.7.

that it liberates and universalizes the self in order to prevent the individual from retreating to a first-person perspective unhinged from the necessarily cosmic perspective that must be integrated into any coherent understanding of moral agency.<sup>48</sup> That is to say, the accentuation of the self-reflexive ethic in Seneca's writing functions in the first place to individuate the moral agent and set his calculations (and it is always a he in Seneca) apart from the prevailing moral values that happen to pervade the local context in which he finds himself; but it does so in order to implicate him in a form of moral inquiry that aims at the very opposite of leaving him high and dry—deracinated, deterritorialized, and desocialized—in a space of private self-constitution. On the contrary, having grounded him within a properly rational community, the exercise then returns him to his specific context to allow him to reflect more securely on the relevant materials that he has at his disposal and whose utility he needs to assess in order to navigate a rational, happy, and free path through life.

Roman Stoics before Seneca had already begun to elaborate a specific conceptual apparatus in order to deal with the process by which individual moral agents pick their way through, rather than around, the specificities of their immediately given moral, social, and political context toward a firmly objective rational position. This apparatus was assembled as a theory of *personae*. It surfaces in Cicero's *De officiis*, but it is ultimately traceable to the Roman Stoic Panaetius.<sup>49</sup> It is a theory that, far from depoliticizing the Stoic moral subject, contributes to a surprisingly subtle picture of what Gill has called a "structured self," capable of straddling the two republics about which Seneca talks.<sup>50</sup> And it is a theory whose impact on Seneca's *De clementia* supplies us with by far the most important reason for talking about Seneca's sovereign prince as a type of *persona*. For Seneca recurs to this very term himself in the text, and in a way that firmly indicates his appropriation of some of the concepts that had been central to the Ciceronian rendition of the theory. I accordingly devote some time in part II to showing how he relies on key elements of both the structure and the content of this theory of persons in order to delineate in sufficient detail the specific character of his prince.

Here I am interested in explicating one particular thread of Seneca's argument, which will become prominent in part III when I consider its reception. Seneca derives a significant amount of content for the prince's moral identity from a consideration of his *natura* and his *fortuna*. Seneca is adamant that the *persona* that he is busy elaborating for the monarch is one to which the latter is naturally fitted in view of his own, internal resources. At the same time, Seneca also wishes to point to the constellation of equally unique external circumstances which Seneca consistently ascribes to the monarch's *fortuna*. This relation between the *persona* of the prince and his *fortuna* rounds out the formative context in which Seneca sets out to itemize the prince's moral duties, and it is a part of the theory that will be seized upon and amplified—often with material garnered from elsewhere in Seneca's corpus—to an extraordinary degree by Seneca's Renaissance readers. But it is a relation that repays close inspection in its classical setting, not least because it is mapped out in a Stoic providential and deterministic moral universe in which

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<sup>48</sup> Hadot's criticism of Foucault for suggesting precisely the opposite is underlined in Ker, "Seneca on Self-Examination," 168.

<sup>49</sup> For a reconstruction of the theory, see above all Christopher Gill, "Personhood and Personality: The Four-*Personae* Theory in Cicero's *De officiis*," in *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, vol. 6, 1988, ed. Julia Annas (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 169–200; Christopher Gill, *The Structured Self in Hellenistic and Roman Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006); Richard Sorajbi, *Self* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2006), 157–71.

<sup>50</sup> Gill, *Structured Self*.

the conventional Roman notion of *fortuna* as a contingent and capricious force in human affairs would seem, at first glance, to have no meaningful place at all. In *De clementia* and elsewhere, Seneca is engaged in recharacterizing the concept of *fortuna* in order to make it do some important and imaginative philosophical work. As he does so, Seneca seizes the opportunity to revel at length in a highly paradoxical and extremely striking set of formulations designed to underline the point he is making about the prince and *fortuna*. These formulations are unpacked as Seneca sets about forcefully explicating a single doctrine that, he is adamant, his sovereign must learn as a condition of his rule: the prince's great good fortune to be the master of the human race is a form of slavery, and a deeply burdensome one at that. Seneca's insistence on the enslaved status of the prince is clearly informed by ideological concerns that are important to consider, but there are some theoretical tensions in Seneca's paradox that require further thought. We need to see that not only the conventional Roman notion of *fortuna* but also conventional Roman political ideas about liberty and servitude are subjected to radical redescription in Seneca's political theory as a consequence of his Stoic commitments.

## PART II

Of the three characteristics underlined in Bodin's comment about the Senecan prologue—that it is a statement of sovereignty, articulated by the person of the Roman *princeps*, who is conjured into existence to ventriloquize Seneca's thoughts by an act of impersonation—the first two are obvious enough. In the opening of Seneca's theory, the principal powers that Bodin famously itemizes as rights in his anatomy of the concept of sovereignty are invested in various parts of the anatomy of the *princeps*.<sup>51</sup> As vicegerent of the gods on earth, the *princeps* wields the power of life and death over his subjects throughout the entire world: their destiny has been deposited in his hand. As *imperator*, the *princeps* retains supreme command of the armed forces: their weapons are drawn at his nod. As the supreme arbiter of all human affairs, the *princeps* exercises full jurisdictional power: law is constituted through the verdicts and pronouncements issuing from his mouth. But Seneca also begins to burrow inward to draw the prince's psyche into his picture of the person who wields these political powers. The prosperity of the prince's realm, we are told, depends upon his goodwill. The safe guardianship of the entire human race rests upon his cultivation of the kind of rationality required by the divine trustee if he is to be capable of keeping and giving an account of his administration of this vast estate to the gods—and to the gods alone.<sup>52</sup>

Two items of Seneca's vocabulary describe the sovereign powers available to the prince. The first is *potestas*, which is used in two main ways. On the one hand, Seneca deploys the word to pick out individual powers. We see this in Seneca's discussion of the *vitae necisque potestas*, the power of life and death wielded by the prince over his subjects, a fact which appears to confirm their worst suspicions that under the Principate they have now been relegated to the status of slaves under a master. Seneca seeks to allay their fears by recharacterizing the power as the *patria potestas*, asserting that the relation between the clement ruler and his subjects is a paternal one in which the power to punish by death (legally enjoyed by Roman fathers over their offspring as well as by masters over slaves) is always exercised in a benevolent, loving fashion. Calling the prince *pater patriae*, Seneca says, is far from "empty flattery"; it serves to remind him that "he has been given the *patria potestas*, the most moderate of powers in caring for children and subordi-

<sup>51</sup> For the text, see n. 1.

<sup>52</sup> For the idea of vicegerency, see J. Rufus Fears, "Nero as the Vicegerent of the Gods in Seneca's *De clementia*," *Hermes* 103 (1975): 486–96.

nating his own interests to theirs.”<sup>53</sup> On the other hand, Seneca uses the word and its cognates in a suitably magnified manner to make rather general assertions of the unbounded character of the prince’s power. When he lays out the main foundations of his penology, he insists on the need for a carefully calculated economy of violence: “punishments by mighty potentates cause more terror than harm,” he points out, adding that “it is not what he has done, but what he may do, that people consider in the case of one who has the power to do anything.”<sup>54</sup> He later explains that true mercy “means supreme power exercised with the truest self-control, an embracing love for the human race as though for oneself.”<sup>55</sup>

Alternatively, Seneca relies on the term *imperium* to refer collectively to the bundle of sovereign powers at the prince’s disposal. *Imperium* was a key concept in Roman public law that was traditionally used to describe the executive power invested to varying degrees in the higher Roman magistrates, but it is used in *De clementia* in a looser and broader way to talk about the prince’s supreme command over his subjects that he enjoys as a consequence of his monopoly of the full range of executive, military, and legislative powers, including, of course, capital jurisdiction in criminal matters—the *ius gladii*. So, for example, the boast of the merciful monarch in the prologue that “my sword has been sheathed, indeed hung away altogether,” is the earliest example of Seneca’s insistence on the highly beneficial prophylactic effects of the virtue of clemency; Seneca returns to the same imagery later, describing clemency as a useful political emollient, defining it as a way of “blunting the edge of one’s *imperium*.”<sup>56</sup> Elsewhere, when Seneca is warning his monarch of some stringent moral constraints to which he is subject, he spells out the perils of princely anger, reminding him that “for a king, it hardly accords with his majesty so much as to raise his voice or use intemperate language”; at which point, the person of the prince, whom we have met in the prologue, suddenly comes back to life to exclaim, “But this is slavery, not *imperium*!”

In wielding *imperium*, the prince’s position in relation to human, or “positive,” law is absolute. Seneca’s philosophy of clemency commences with a stark recognition of this situation. The significance in the monologue of the phrase “I watch over myself as though the laws . . . will call me to account” lies in Seneca’s use of “as though,” which effectively transfers the custodial function of external laws governing the exercise of political power to the person of the prince himself.<sup>57</sup> The prince may choose to bind himself to the laws, and he may be well-advised to do so; but formally speaking, he is wholly unobliged.

Given the absence of any legal or constitutional restraints upon the exercise of his rule, the mental state of the prince becomes of crucial importance in Seneca’s political theory. After briefly

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<sup>53</sup> Seneca, *Clem.* 1.14.2: 120 (146): “Hoc quod parenti etiam principi faciendum est, quem appellavimus patrem patriae non adulatione vana adducti . . . patrem quidem patriae appellavimus ut sciret datam sibi potestatem patriam, quae est temperantissima liberis consulens suaque post illos reponens.”

<sup>54</sup> Seneca, *Clem.* 1.8.5: 108 (136): “Ut fulmina paucorum periculo cadunt, omnium metu, sic animadversiones magnarum potestatum terrent latius quam nocent, non sine causa; non enim quantum fecerit sed quantum facturus sit cogitator in eo qui omnia potest.”

<sup>55</sup> Seneca, *Clem.* 1.11.2: 114 (142): “haec est in maxima potestate verissima animi temperantia et humani generis †compraenditte sibi mor †.”

<sup>56</sup> Seneca, *Clem.* 1.1.3: 94 (129): “Conditum, immo constrictum apud me ferrum est.” *Clem.* 1.11.2: 114 (143): “Haec est, Caesar, clementia . . . hebetare aciem imperii sui.” Note, too, *Clem.* 1.7.2: 106 (136): “Quod si di placabiles et aequi delicta potentium non statim fulminibus persequuntur, quanto aequius est hominem hominibus praepositum miti animo exercere imperium.”

<sup>57</sup> For the text, see n. 1; for glosses, see Griffin, “Seneca and Pliny,” 536–37; Procopé’s and Cooper’s comments in Seneca, *Moral and Political Essays*, 124.

mentioning various parts of the prince's body in the prologue, Seneca then develops his account of the *persona* of the prince—as we would expect from a Stoic—purely in terms of his mental qualities. Seneca has a favored way of expressing the logic of his unerringly narrow focus on the *bona mens* of the prince. The graphic inscription of sovereign power upon the prince marks the beginning of an importantly innovative conceptual maneuver that is systematically pursued throughout *De clementia*. As Seneca's argument unfolds, it engages in a relentless reconfiguration of the image of the *corpus reipublicae*, already firmly lodged in Roman political theory, along a thoroughly monarchical axis.<sup>58</sup> The incomparably elaborate metaphor of the body politic in *De clementia* borders on the baroque, its extravagance in large part dictated by Seneca's desire to emphasize his fundamental point that a healthy body politic undertakes what its princely head commands. Early on in the text, Seneca informs his prince that “you are the mind of the *res publica*, and it is your body”; and throughout the theory, the welfare of the body is said to be guaranteed by the mental qualities of its princely head: “the gentleness of your mind will be transmitted to others; little by little, it will be diffused over the whole body of the empire. All will be formed in your likeness. Health springs from the head.”<sup>59</sup> Seneca turns to the language of slavery to describe the relationship between the political body and its princely mind. He tells us that, just as “the body is entirely at the service of the mind [and] hands, feet and eyes do its business, the skin that we see protects it,” so “in the same way this vast multitude of men surrounds one man as though he were its mind, ruled by his spirit, guided by his reason; it would crush and shatter itself by its own strength without the support of his *consilium*.”<sup>60</sup> If the wrong elements predominate in the mind, there are devastating consequences for the political body: at the mind's command, “we lie still . . . or else we run restlessly about when it has given the order. If it is a greedy master, we scan the sea for material gain; if an ambitious one, it has long since led us to thrust our right hand into the flame.”<sup>61</sup> Seneca underlines this relationship of dependency in fairly dramatic terms, describing the prince as the “bond which holds the *res publica* together, the breath of life, . . . the mind of the empire.”<sup>62</sup> He even gestures at a historical explanation underpinning his political ontology: “long ago Caesar so worked himself into the *res publica* that neither could be separated without the ruin of the other. He needs the strength and the *res publica* needs a head.”<sup>63</sup>

Even this cursory outline of the political body in Seneca's argument reveals that one of its central concerns is to bring some philosophical rigor to the foundational claim of Roman imperial ideology that the Augustan revolution had secured both the restoration of the Roman *res publica* and the recovery of its *libertas* after the civil wars, rather than their extinction. The basic

<sup>58</sup> For the *corpus reipublicae*, see, e.g., Cicero, *De officiis* 1.25.85.

<sup>59</sup> Seneca, *Clem.* 1.5.1: 102 (my translation): “tu animus rei publicae tuae es, illa corpus tuum.” *Clem.* 2.2.1: 140 (159): “Tradetur ista animi tui mansuetudo diffundeturque paulatim per omne imperii corpus, et cuncta in similitudinem tuam formabuntur. A capite bona valetudo.”

<sup>60</sup> Seneca, *Clem.* 1.3.5: 100 (132–33): “Quemadmodum totum corpus animo deservit et, cum hoc tanto maius tantoque speciosius sit, ille in occulto maneat tenuis et in qua sede latitet incertus, tamen manus, pedes, oculi negotium illi gerunt, illum haec cutis munit . . . sic haec immensa multitudo unius animae circumdata illius spiritu regitur, illius ratione flectitur pressura se ac fractura viribus suis, nisi consilio sustineretur.”

<sup>61</sup> Seneca, *Clem.* 1.3.5: 100 (132): “illius [sc. animi] iussu iacemus aut inquieti discurrimus, cum ille imperavit, sive avarus dominus est, mare lucri causa scrutamur, sive ambitiosus, iam dudum dextram flammis obiecimur.”

<sup>62</sup> Seneca, *Clem.* 1.4.1: 100 (133): “Ille est enim vinculum, per quod *res publica* cohaeret, ille spiritus vitalis, quem haec tot milia trahunt nihil ipsa per se futura nisi onus et praeda, si mens illa imperii subtrahatur.”

<sup>63</sup> Seneca, *Clem.* 1.4.2: 102 (133): “Olim enim ita se induit rei publicae Caesar, ut seduci alterum non posset sine utriusque pernicie; nam et illi viribus opus est et huic capite.”

shape of Seneca's case for the monarchical republic can already be observed in the *Res gestae*, where the proclamation of the *princeps* as *vindex libertatis* had presented Augustus in juridical language as the liberator of a person held in a servile condition contrary to the law.<sup>64</sup> Augustus's opening boast in the *Res gestae* had stated: "I raised an army, with which I successfully championed the liberty of the republic when it was oppressed by the tyranny of a faction."<sup>65</sup> The implication was clear enough: the Roman people were encouraged to think of the transformation of their *res publica* at the hands of Augustus as the passage of a body from a position of unlawful servitude under the domination of a partisan faction to a condition of liberty now rightfully restored to it. Seneca's text tells a version of this same story, but with sharper conceptual tools. He similarly claims that under the rule of the clement *princeps*, the Roman populace now looks upon "the happiest form of *res publica* . . . with supreme *libertas* in want of nothing save the licence to ruin itself."<sup>66</sup> But by setting the narrative within a Stoic cosmos, Seneca is able to extend a vision of the Roman body politic once wracked by internal division but now governed by a sublimely rational princely *mens* as the triumphant restoration of rational rule to the *res publica* after the self-destructive madness of the preceding period. It is of this political body, cured of its passional ills by a *princeps* cast in the role of a caring medic, that Seneca posits *libertas*.

The thrust of this argument effectively reverses the conventional Roman political wisdom that life under the rule of a monarch amounted to the virtual antonym of the condition of liberty. Hatred of monarchy was an entrenched Roman prejudice.<sup>67</sup> The belief that it was a form of servitude was no less firmly grounded in Roman political theory. The concept of *libertas* central to Roman republicanism enshrined at a political level the basic preoccupation characteristic of pre-Platonic Greek classical thinking about freedom, which contended that "being free stands opposed, above all, to being in someone's power . . . to lack freedom is paradigmatically . . . to be subject to the will of another."<sup>68</sup> Roman republicanism articulated an understanding of the states of liberty and servitude that was in broad agreement with Roman legal thinking about the distinction between free persons and slaves and that later came to be enshrined in the *Digest*. The *Digest* states that "the chief division in the law of persons is that all men are either free or else are slaves."<sup>69</sup> The difference between free and unfree persons consists in the fact that "some persons are in their own power, some are subject to the law of another"; slaves are persons "in the power of their masters" and, as such, are said to be "subject to the jurisdiction of someone else."<sup>70</sup> If Seneca is serious about the continuing applicability of the language of *res publica* and *libertas* to the dramatically altered political realities of post-Augustan Rome, he needs to meet the accusation

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<sup>64</sup> For this point, see the excellent discussion in Roller, *Constructing Autocracy*, 214–15.

<sup>65</sup> P. A. Brunt and J. M. Moore, eds., *Res gestae divi Augustus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967), 17 (translation at 19): "rem publicam a dominatione factionis oppressam in libertatem vindicavi."

<sup>66</sup> Seneca, *Clem.* 1.1.8: 96 (130): "obversatur oculis laetissima forma rei publica, cui ad summam libertatem nihil deest nisi pereundi licentia."

<sup>67</sup> E.g., Cicero, *De republica* 2.52: "odium populum Romanum regalis nominis tenuit." For this point, see Braund's discussion in Seneca, *Clem.* 18–19.

<sup>68</sup> Bernard Williams, *Shame and Necessity*, 2d pbk. ed. (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2008), 154.

<sup>69</sup> *Digest*, 1.5.3 (Mommsen and Krueger, 15): "Summa itaque de iure personarum division haec est, quod omnes homines aut liberi sunt aut servi."

<sup>70</sup> *Digest*, 1.6.1 (Mommsen and Krueger, 17): "Quaedam personae sui iuris sunt, quaedam alieno iuri subiectae sunt . . . in potestate sunt servi dominorum."

that the new political order has imposed a barely disguised form of domination over the Roman people, effectively subjecting the *res publica* to the *arbitrium* of another person.

Seneca's first response to this problem is to concede immediately that the body politic and everyone in it are, indeed, subject to the *ius* and *potestas* of the prince. Everyone is, in fact, entirely at the prince's mercy. On Seneca's own admission, Roman people are now locked into a form of political subjection virtually indistinguishable from that of formal servitude, which is one reason that Seneca repeatedly, and rather shockingly, holds up acts of cruelty and clemency within master-slave relations as *exempla* to be borne in mind by the prince when considering how to treat his subjects. Seneca is fairly unsparing in his depiction of this status. The text opens with an entreaty to the prince to lower his lofty gaze upon "an immense multitude, quarrelsome, factious, uncontrolled," whose riotously irrational disposition is held in check only by "the yoke now upon it."<sup>71</sup> A little later, we encounter the thought that the prince is not only a *iugum* but a *vinculum*, a chain binding that multitude together into a coherent *res publica*.<sup>72</sup>

But Seneca wants to claim that this relationship does not necessarily constitute a form of slavery at all—any more, in fact, than the formal institution of slavery necessarily imposes servitude, properly understood, upon the slave. Seneca's conception of freedom and slavery is entirely different from the conventional Roman understanding of those terms. For Seneca and the Stoics, provided one's powers of reason were sufficiently developed to the point of having eliminated the passions, one could maintain one's freedom in the face of tyranny, slavery, imprisonment, and even torture.<sup>73</sup> In a notorious passage, Seneca lays out his position: "It is a mistake to think that slavery goes all the way down into the man. The better part of him remains outside of it. The body belongs to the master and is subject to him, but the soul is autonomous [*sui iuris*], and is so free that it cannot be held by any prison. . . . It is the body that luck [*fortuna*] has given over to the master; this he buys and sells; that interior part cannot be handed over as property."<sup>74</sup> Seneca's version of the Stoic vision of human liberty has a significant local inflection here, in that it is framed in terms of the Roman civil account of a free person as one who is *sui iuris*; but it substitutes a civil conception of *ius* with a metaphysical one, as we shall see (it is also marked by a rather peculiar form of dualism that emerges elsewhere in Seneca's work and is often misinterpreted as a Platonizing tendency).<sup>75</sup> In *De clementia*, Seneca starts to insinuate into Roman political discourse this Stoic notion of freedom. As he does so, Seneca produces a political ontology that entirely erases the idea that the *populus* without the prince might be considered a coherent, unified body with a capacity for rational agency. On the contrary, it is repeatedly described as a

<sup>71</sup> Seneca, *Clem.* 1.1.1–2: 94 (128): "in hanc immensam multitudinem discordem, seditiosam, impotentem, in perniciem alienam suamque partier exultaturam si hoc iugum fregerit."

<sup>72</sup> Seneca, *Clem.* 1.4.1: 100 (133): "Ille est enim vinculum, per quod res publica cohaeret."

<sup>73</sup> Of the large literature on Stoicism and liberty, see esp. A. A. Long, "Freedom and Determinism in the Stoic Theory of Human Action," in *Problems in Stoicism*, ed. A. A. Long (London: Athlone, 1996), 173–99; Suzanne Bobzien, *Determinism and Freedom in Stoic Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

<sup>74</sup> Seneca, *De beneficiis* 20.1–2 (*Moral Essays*, 3:164): "Errat, si quis existimat servitutem in totum hominem descendere. Pars melior eius excepta est. Corpora obnoxia sunt et adscripta dominis; mens quidem sui iuris, quae adeo libera et vaga est, ut ne ab hoc quidem carcere, cui inclusa est, teneri queat . . . corpus itaque est, quod domino fortuna tradidit; hoc emit, hoc vendit; interior illa pars mancipio dari non potest." Translation cited from Bernard Williams (who calls the passage "repulsive"), *Shame and Necessity*, 116. For a recent discussion, see Inwood, *Reading Seneca*, 254–58.

<sup>75</sup> For a clear explanation of the tendency, see Inwood's chapter "Seneca and Psychological Dualism," in *Reading Seneca*, 23–64.

mere *multitudo*, which “surrounds one man as though he were its mind, ruled by his spirit, guided by his reason; it would crush and shatter itself by its own strength without the support of his discernment.”<sup>76</sup> And Seneca goes on to cite the famous passage from the *Georgics* in which the monarch of the bees is compared to an earthly ruler, to the effect that “while he survives, in concord and content / The commons live, by no divisions rent, / But the great monarch’s death dissolves the government.”<sup>77</sup> Seneca thus furnishes a picture of the Roman *populus* without the prince as a mere amalgam of internally divided and eternally fractious elements, a demented mass incapable of ruling itself and constituted as a viable political body only upon the acquisition of a princely head. According to Seneca, the Roman body politic, once wracked by internal division, has now come to be governed by a sublimely virtuous princely *mens* who has imposed a form of rational rule upon it and restored it to freedom.

Having set up the terms of his theory in this way, Seneca must contend that the princely *persona* who rules the body really is the embodiment of passionless Stoic rationality. To mount this claim, he recurs to the third characteristic underlined by Bodin: the use of the figure of impersonation in the prologue. Notwithstanding his preexisting pedagogical relationship with the new emperor, Seneca needs to step with considerable care in the political circumstances in which he is obliged to lay out his theory of princely government. His dilemma—so characteristic of absolutism—is that he risks losing a great deal more than the attention of his audience if Nero detects too much distance between Seneca’s normative account of the monarchical *persona* and himself. Nero, in short, has to be held to be the type of person whom Seneca is describing. Seneca conjures a quite astonishing amount of creative freedom out of these restrictions by presenting his argument from the very start in the form of an extended and highly audacious fiction about the prince so that he can, as Bodin underlines, speak “in the person of Nero.” By the end of his first sentence, Seneca has split Nero into two persons. The syntax of Seneca’s promise to hold forth (*te tibi ostenderem*) makes it quite clear that it is only one of these *personae*—the impersonated *te* reflected in Seneca’s mirror and not the *tibi* beyond the text hailed as Nero Caesar—who is “on the point of attaining the greatest pleasure of all.”<sup>78</sup> And by the end of his second sentence, we begin to learn why such pleasure is in store for Nero’s reflected image as he comes to life to deliver the elegant monologue cited by Bodin.

That speech functions as a summary of Seneca’s entire argument. The *persona* of Nero embodies and exemplifies all the precepts that Seneca will go on to discuss in his theory. As such, he is Seneca’s ingenious way of providing his audience with a brief statement of his case, one of the essential functions of any orator’s proem. But the device also allows Seneca to assert that Nero is already as Nero should be. He underlines this point for the prince in the prologue: “no one . . . seeks an example for you to imitate—except for yourself.”<sup>79</sup> Seneca’s stated aim in addressing Nero is “that you be as familiar as possible with your good deeds and words so that what is now a

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<sup>76</sup> Seneca, *Clem.* 1.3.5: 100 (132–33): “Quemadmodum totum corpus animo deservit et, cum hoc tanto maius tantoque speciosius sit, ille in occulto maneat tenuis et in qua sede latitet incertus, tamen manus, pedes, oculi negotium illi gerunt, illum haec cutis munit . . . sic haec immensa multitudo unius animae circumdata illius spiritu regitur, illius ratione flectitur pressura se ac fractura viribus suis, nisi consilio sustineretur.”

<sup>77</sup> Seneca, *Clem.* 1.4.1: 100 (133): “Rege incolumi mens omnibus una; amisso rupere fidem” (citing Virgil, *Georgics* 4.212–13).

<sup>78</sup> Seneca, *Clem.* 1.1.1–2: 94 (128): “Scribere de clementia, Nero Caesar, institui, ut quodam modo speculi vice fungerer et te tibi ostenderem perventurum ad voluptatem maximam omnium.”

<sup>79</sup> Seneca, *Clem.* 1.1.6: 96 (129): “nemo iam divum Augustum nec Ti. Caesaris prima tempora loquitur nec, quod te imitari velit, exemplar extra te quaerit.”

matter of natural impulse in you may become a matter of settled judgement.”<sup>80</sup> The task, then, is not to make Nero’s words and deeds different but to keep them the same. The structure of the text, however, allows Seneca to recapture the ground on which his praise is to work throughout the rest of the text. If he needs to assert that Nero already is as Nero should be, Seneca makes sure from the outset that it is he who establishes the identity of Nero. The pattern of the argument is not, therefore, that Nero is praised for being the embodiment of mercy, which is then shown to be the necessary virtue in a ruler. Instead, Nero is shown what he is through an impersonation and then praised for being identical to the person impersonated. All Seneca’s praise—which, significantly, is directed at Nero only after the *persona* of Nero has delivered his opening speech—works only if Nero recognizes himself to be the person whom Seneca shows him to be. And at a theoretical level, supreme command—the absolute judicial, legislative, and military power that Seneca attributes to the person of Nero on the basis of his entirely rational (and therefore entirely virtuous) disposition—is only legitimately Nero’s if he successfully integrates the conscientious *persona* that Seneca figures in his speech. The overall effect of this rhetorical strategy is thus to make each occasion on which Seneca praises the emperor for embodying the principles he is explicating potentially extraordinarily stressful for Nero. Once we begin to unravel its rhetorical form, it becomes clear that *De clementia* is actually setting the moral bar extremely—and perhaps even impossibly—high for the absolute prince. At one point, as Nero struggles to incorporate the identity that Seneca has fashioned for him, he bursts out: “But this is slavery, not *imperium!*”<sup>81</sup> This is perhaps the cleverest thing that Nero never said, but Seneca rounds on him sharply:

What? Are you not aware that this supreme command means noble slavery for you. . . . You cannot escape your *fortuna*. It besieges you; wherever you descend, it follows you with its mass of trappings. The slavery of being supremely great lies in the impossibility of ever becoming anything less. But this constraint is one which you share with the gods. They too are held bound to the heavens. No more is it granted to them than it would be safe for you to come down. You are fixed to your pinnacle. When we move, few notice. We can go, come back, change costume unnoticed by the public. You have no more chance than the sun of not being seen. A flood of light meets you face to face, and the eyes of all are turned towards it.<sup>82</sup>

The doctrine of princely servitude in *De clementia* develops some observations made in Seneca’s *De consolatione ad Polybium*, written in exile a few years earlier. There he had declared, too, that “a great *fortuna* is a great slavery,” illustrating his point by reference to the Roman monarch: “Caesar, who may do all things, may not do many things for the very same reason. His watchfulness guards all men’s sleep, his toil all men’s ease, his industry all men’s dissipations, his work all men’s vacation. On the day that Caesar dedicated himself to the wide world, he robbed himself of himself. . . . he may never halt or do anything for himself.”<sup>83</sup> In *De clementia*, Seneca is

<sup>80</sup> Seneca, *Clem.* 2.2.2: 142 (159): “quod bene factis dictisque tuis quam familiarissimum esse te cupio, ut, quod nunc natura et impetus est, fiat iudicium.”

<sup>81</sup> Seneca, *Clem.* 1.8.1: 106 (136): “‘ista’ inquis ‘servitus est, non imperium.’”

<sup>82</sup> Seneca, *Clem.* 1.8.1–4 (136): “Quid? Tu non experiris istud nobilem esse tibi servitatem. . . . Aberrare a fortuna tua non potes; obsidet te et, quocumque descendis, magno apparatu sequitur. Est haec summae magnitudinis servitus non posse fieri minorem.”

<sup>83</sup> Seneca, *De consolatione ad Polybium* 6.5–7.3 (*Moral Essays*, 2:372–75): “Magna servitus est magna fortuna. . . . Caesari quoque ipsi, cum omnia licent, propter hoc ipsum multa non licent. Omnia somnos illius vigilia defendit, omnium otium illius labor, omnium delicias illius industria, omnium vacationem illius occupatio. Ex quo se Caesar

similarly unremitting in his depiction of this state of princely servitude. He barely finishes congratulating Nero for recognizing himself in the image of the prince in the prologue before turning to remind him:

But the burden which you have taken upon yourself is huge. No one now speaks of our deified Augustus or the early years of Tiberius Caesar; no one seeks an example for you to imitate—apart from yourself. Your reign is being judged by the taste which we have had of it. This would be hard were that goodness of yours put on for the moment. No one can wear a mask [*persona*] for long; fictions [*ficta*] soon fall back into their own true nature.<sup>84</sup>

This injunction very strongly echoes Cicero's warning to his republican magistrate in *De officiis* about the dangers of dissimulation: "the nearest path to glory . . . is to behave in such a way that one is what one wishes to be thought. For men who think they can secure for themselves unshakeable glory by pretence and empty show, by dissembling in speech and countenance, are wildly mistaken."<sup>85</sup> Seneca is simply reiterating the fundamental importance of this wisdom to the person of the prince: Nero cannot get away with acting a part. He must embody the moral person who Seneca's text holds him to be. For Seneca as for Cicero, that *persona* must be rooted in one's nature. Notwithstanding the theatrical associations of the language to which they recur in their respective conceptions of political personality, both thinkers are very anxious to distance themselves from the suggestion that artifice or simulation is an acceptable substitute for the proper incorporation of the moral qualities necessary for success in political life. But Seneca's warning to Nero (ever the aspiring actor) that "no one can wear a *persona* for long" is nevertheless an astoundingly ironic way of putting the point, not least because a *persona* is precisely what Seneca has pressed upon Nero in his text through the fiction of impersonation.

If Seneca's sovereign *persona* is represented by means of a fiction, it is nevertheless a theoretical construction assembled from much more concrete concerns. One can see already how two sets of considerations in particular inform it: the prince's *natura* and the prince's *fortuna*. Seneca's use of these concepts indicates his reliance on some of the central elements of the Stoic theory of *personae* that Cicero's *De officiis* had broached. In that text, we learn of a basic distinction that Cicero reports in his summary of the theory:

We should realise that we are clothed by nature, as it were, with two *personae*, of which the communal one derives from the fact that we all participate in reason and in that superiority by which we excel over animals and from which is drawn all good and proper conduct and from which is found the method for asserting our duty. The other *persona* is that attributed to individuals as special to them [*proprie*]. . . . But everyone must hold firmly onto what is his own, so long as it is not vicious but special [*proprie*] to him, so that that proper conduct that we are seeking may more easily be secured. For we must act in such a way that we in no

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orbi terrarum dedicavit, sibi eripuit, et siderum modo, quae irrequieta semper cursus suos explicant, numquam illi licet subsistere nec quicquam suum facere."

<sup>84</sup> Seneca, *Clem.* 1.1.6: 96 (129–30): "Sed ingens tibi onus imposuisti; nemo iam divum Augustum nec Ti. Caesaris prima tempora loquitur nec quod te imitari velit exemplar extra te quaerit; principatus tuus ad gustum exigitur. Difficile hoc fuisset, si non naturalis tibi ista bonitas esset, sed ad tempus sumpta. Nemo enim potest personam diu ferre, ficta cito in naturam suam recidunt; quibus veritas subest quaeque, ut ita dicam, ex solido enascuntur, tempore ipso in maius meliusque procedunt."

<sup>85</sup> Cicero, *On Duties*, trans. Walter Miller (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1913), 210 (2.12.43): "Quodsi qui simulatione et inani ostentatione et ficto non modo sermone, sed etiam vultu stabilem se gloriam consequi posse rentur, vehementer errant." Translation from Cicero, *On Duties*, ed. M. T. Griffin and E. M. Atkins (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 79.

way oppose universal nature, but with that safeguarded, we follow our own special [*proprie*] nature. . . . And this difference of natures has so much force that sometimes one ought to commit suicide, while another in the same situation ought not. . . . Each person must weigh what he has as his own peculiarity and must regulate that and not want to try how he would be suited by another's. For what suits each person best is what is most peculiar to him.<sup>86</sup>

The point of the division in the theory is to introduce a considerable degree of suppleness, sensitivity, and specificity into Stoic moral reasoning by attending to what Inwood terms “situational variability.”<sup>87</sup> The Stoics say that we must always live according to our rational nature—our first *persona*—remembering that we belong to a universal community of gods and men. To that extent we are bound to observe some absolute, exceptionless principles enshrined in natural law. Seneca calls these principles *decreta*.<sup>88</sup> They lock together to give Stoic moral theory an overarching deontological structure: they remind us that humans are rational and social creatures born for the common good and bound by reciprocal love; and they are often enunciated as very pithy *formulae* enjoining us to follow nature, cleave to reason as the sole good in life, and so on. So, for example, we find Seneca reminding us in *De clementia* of the very general principle that “man should be seen as a social animal born for the common good.”<sup>89</sup> But *decreta* are rarely more than variations on the basic Chrysippean point to obey natural law; alone, they offer no substantive moral guidance on what actually to do in life. Even on the issue of whether or not to engage in political life, the Stoic line is not a dogmatic *decretum* but only a qualified response: one should do so unless circumstances such as tyranny or ill-health jeopardize one's pursuit of a rational life.<sup>90</sup> Should we commit suicide rather than submit to tyranny? In Cato's case, it was the right thing to do; but it would not have been so for everyone else—and perhaps not for anyone else (only a *sapiens* should commit suicide).<sup>91</sup> In making such decisions, the injunction to follow nature does not get you very far. To that end, *decreta* need to be supplemented with a further body of more honed instructions.

The Stoics' approach to the question of what, in practical terms, it meant to follow the law of the cosmic *civitas* in any given local environment had arguably always been far more functional, flexible, and context specific—and, in this respect, much closer to the form of moral reasoning embodied in Aristotle's *phronimos*—than was conceded to them by the older, and slightly parodic, portrait of Stoic deontology as a rigid, unyielding, and stark system of abstract

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<sup>86</sup> Cicero, *On Duties* (Miller), 108–17 (1.30.107–31.115): “Intellegendum etiam est duabus quasi nos a natura indutos esse personis; quarum una communis est ex eo, quod omnes participes sumus rationis praestantiaeque eius, qua antecellimus bestiis, a qua omne honestum decorumque trahitur et ex qua ratio inveniendi officii exquiritur, altera autem quae proprie singulis est tributa . . . admodum autem tenenda sunt sua cuique non vitiosa, sed tamen propria, quo facilius decorum illud, quod quaerimus, retineatur. Sic enim est faciendum, ut contra universam naturam nihil consequamur, ut, etiamsi sint alia graviora atque meliora, tamen nos studia nostra nostrae naturae regula . . . haec differentia naturarum tantam habet vim, ut non numquam mortem sibi ipse consciscere alius debeat, alius [in eadem causa] non debeat . . . quae contemplantes expendere oportebit, quid quisque habeat sui, eaque moderari nec velle experiri, quam se aliena deceant; ide enim maxime quemque decet, quod est cuiusque maxime suum.” Translation (slightly amended) from Richard Sorabji, *Self* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 168–69.

<sup>87</sup> Inwood, *Reading Seneca*, 96.

<sup>88</sup> The following discussion is indebted to the analysis of Stoic axiology and of the considerable literature on the subject in chapter 4 (“Rules and Reasoning in Stoic Ethics”) of Inwood, *Reading Seneca*, 95–131.

<sup>89</sup> Seneca, *Clem.* 1.3.2: 98 (131–32): “necesse est non solum inter nos, qui hominem sociale animal communi bono genitum videri volumus, sed etiam.”

<sup>90</sup> See Seneca, *De otio* 3.2–3.

<sup>91</sup> Inwood, *Reading Seneca*, 113.

universal principles.<sup>92</sup> But it is true that the clearest surviving evidence of a strong commitment to pursuing this line of thinking is a Roman body of work dating from the time of Posidonius and Panaetius and dedicated to elaborating *praecepta*: individual guidance on how to act in a manner appropriate to one's specific conditions and individual circumstances. In particular, *praecepta* provide advice on how to act in relation to the range of objects designated by the Stoics as "indifferents": things like health, wealth, and social position, which have no intrinsic moral value for the Stoics (virtue is the sole good in the Stoic moral universe) and which need to be organized under the heading of "preferred" or "dispreferred" after close scrutiny of the prevailing conditions in which they are present or absent. The decision to commit suicide is an example of exactly this kind of calculation.

These *praecepta* are crucial in the theory that Cicero describes for shaping a second *persona*, another dimension of our moral identity, which, while firmly anchored in the prior *persona*, is suited to the talents we have each been naturally given and to the social and political circumstances in which we find ourselves. And in the surviving account, we find these considerations of context and character defined in terms of nature and fortune. Cicero adds that "the greatest influence on this calculation is possessed by nature, the next greatest by fortune" and that "it is quite essential to take account of each in choosing a way of life."<sup>93</sup> Cicero then extends his analysis of the various considerations that impinge upon this second particular *persona* by suggesting that we can segregate them and analyze their impact on us in terms of two further *personae*: a third, which is the product of chance and contingency determining our social position, and a fourth, which corresponds to the particular occupation we choose to pursue.<sup>94</sup> This additional layering is somewhat confusing and may well be Cicero's own contribution; he uses it to generate a discussion of what is appropriate to each in a theory of *decorum* inflected by some specific ideological concerns about status and station in the Roman Republic. The real crux of the theory lies in the initial division between the first and second *personae*, which corresponds to the deeper and more general Stoic preoccupation with giving moral guidance to an agent obliged to inhabit, as Seneca reminds us, both the cosmic and the local *civitas* and in need, therefore, of *praecepta* as well as *decreta*.

The unerringly rational agent whom the Stoics regard as a *sapiens* is an entirely integrated moral personality whose successful navigation of situational variability is the consequence of a perfect interlocking of *praecepta* with *decreta*: each action that he undertakes is perfectly appropriate because his understanding of the morally relevant features of any given context is always grounded in a stable grasp of the underlying, universal law to which he is obliged as a member of the cosmic *civitas*. As such, the *sapiens*—and only the *sapiens*—is truly virtuous, capable of the kind of morally correct actions in conformity with the law of nature that the Stoics label *kathēkōmata*. He scarcely needs further philosophical instruction. The Roman audience of Stoic moral philosophy, on the other hand, was taken to comprise ordinary mortals thought to be capable of moral progress and in need of guidance by precepts to help them determine the salient moral features of any given situation. A specific literature emerged, organized around the Stoic category of *kathēkōmata*, or *officia*, of which Cicero's text, based in part on Panaetius's *On Appropriate Actions*, is the most famous extant example.<sup>95</sup> *Kathēkōmata* are defined as appropriate actions that are not underpinned by a total grasp

<sup>92</sup> This point is underlined in Sorabji, *Self*, 164; Inwood, *Reading Seneca*, 96–106.

<sup>93</sup> Cicero, *On Duties* (Miller), 121 (1.33.120): "Ad hanc autem rationem quoniam maximam vim natura habet, fortuna proximam, utriusque omnino habenda ratio est in deligendo genere vitae." Translation from Sorabji, *Self*, 169.

<sup>94</sup> See Cicero, *On Duties* (Miller), 116–18 (1.32.115–17).

<sup>95</sup> See Gill, "Personhood and Personality," 184.

of the moral situation. They are of a much lower order: irrespective of the agent's intentions, they can be said to be the right thing to do if a "reasonable justification" can be mustered in their defense. The category of *kathēkonta* allowed the Stoics to delineate the phenomenon of individuals who may well do the right thing—indeed, may behave exactly as a sage would behave—without being motivated to do so by any grasp at all of reasons that make the action the correct one and without any capacity to formulate a defense of it themselves. The criterion for determining that someone has performed one's moral duty is that the action in question can nevertheless be given an adequately rational, objective defense.

If we turn back to Seneca's analysis of the *persona* whom he impersonates in *De clementia*, we find it closely articulated in the terms of this theory of *personae*. Throughout *De clementia*, Seneca's precepts are shaped to single out the kind of moral conduct that is particularly—indeed peculiarly—fitting for the prince to cultivate, and he repeatedly articulates that concern in a language of *officium* and *decorum*. These concepts lend definition to his philosophical task, allowing him to segregate the moral obligations that the prince shares with the rest of humanity on account of their shared, rational nature from those that are incumbent upon him as a consequence of his own, deeply idiosyncratic position in life and that constitute the fundamental content of Seneca's treatise. Seneca reminds us that the cultivation of clemency is necessary to all human beings, the prince included. "Of all virtues," he says, "none befits a human being more, since none is more humane."<sup>96</sup> Human beings are prone to error: "we have all done wrong, some seriously, some more trivially, some on purpose, some perhaps under impulse or led astray. . . . Nor have we merely transgressed—to the ends of our lives we will continue to transgress."<sup>97</sup> Given this fact about ourselves, it must make sense for us to adopt an attitude of leniency in at least some circumstances in which we are in some way wronged or harmed, even if we might be legally entitled to pursue remedy for the injury. Otherwise, social and civil life is likely to grind to a halt under a welter of dispute and litigation. But, he adds, while "mercy, as I said, is natural to all human beings, it most becomes emperors, finding when among them more to save and greater scope."<sup>98</sup> For "no one could conceive of anything more becoming to a ruler than mercy."<sup>99</sup> Seneca then makes exactly the same point about magnanimity: "greatness of mind befits any mortal, even the poorest—is anything greater or braver than to beat back the force of ill fortune? But this greatness of mind is shown to better effect up on the magistrate's bench than down on the floor."<sup>100</sup> And we later find the same logic applied to the virtue of moderation: all humans need this quality, too, but "the mind of man needs a greater moderation to match its greater violence and power to harm."<sup>101</sup>

In this way, Seneca shares with his Stoic predecessors a demonstrable concern to capture and analyze a set of much more circumstantial and local factors in order to specify appropriate moral action for his moral agent. Accordingly, he generates a distinctive typology of virtues said

<sup>96</sup> Seneca, *Clem.* 1.3.2: 98 (131): "nullam ex omnibus virtutibus homini magis convenire, cum sit nulla humanior."

<sup>97</sup> Seneca, *Clem.* 1.6.3: 104 (135): "Peccavimus omnes, alii gravia, alii leviora, alii ex destinato, alii forte impulsu aut aliena nequitia ablati . . . nec deliquimus tantum, sed usque ad extremum aevi delinquemus."

<sup>98</sup> Seneca, *Clem.* 1.5.2: 102 (134): "clementia omnibus quidem hominibus secundum naturam, maxime tamen decora imperatoribus, quanto plus habet apud illos, quod servet, quantoque in maiore materia apparet."

<sup>99</sup> Seneca, *Clem.* 1.3.3: 100 (132): "Nullum tamen clementia ex omnibus magis quam regem aut principem decet."

<sup>100</sup> Seneca, *Clem.* 1.5.3: 102 (134): "Decet magnanimitas quemlibet mortalem, etiam illum infra quem nihil est; quid enim maius aut fortius quam malam fortunam retundere? Haec tamen magnanimitas in bona fortuna laxiorem locum habet meliusque in tribunali quam in plano conspicitur."

<sup>101</sup> Seneca, *Clem.* 1.19.4: 128 (151) "Pudeat ab exiguis animalibus non trahere mores, cum tanto hominum moderatior esse animus debeat, quanto vehementius nocet."

to be specifically fitting for the sovereign *persona* in view of his *fortuna* as the sole bearer of *imperium*. The list extends beyond the crucial attributes of clemency, magnanimity, and moderation to include *temperantia*, *mansuetudo*, *lenitas*, *humanitas*, and *patientia*, all of which help ensure that the prince's penal policy is characterized by the kind of mitigating, mild, softening attitude that Seneca defines as the essence of clemency.<sup>102</sup> Indeed, when Seneca comes to the task of supplying content for that policy, he starts to draw on the vocabulary of *officium* to characterize the responsibilities of the merciful prince: "What, then," he asks rhetorically, "is his duty? That of good parents."<sup>103</sup> But if the *officia* that Seneca regards as particularly appropriate for a prince are determined by explicit reference to his providentially allotted and inescapably fixed *fortuna*, Seneca is no less concerned to consider his *natura* in order to show that his prince also occupies his unique position as a consequence of his extraordinarily natural aptitude for moral excellence (albeit an aptitude already carefully nurtured by Seneca in his role as the prince's *praeceptor*). Seneca's prince must have the requisite internal resources to match his external circumstances: the theory would collapse if the prince were thought to be punching above his moral weight. This condition helps explain Seneca's comment that Nero would find the high expectations of his subjects now sitting heavily on his young shoulders to be "hard were that goodness of yours not innate [*naturalis bonitas*] but put on for the moment."<sup>104</sup> The same point is made in his claim that the text is designed merely to furnish Nero with a reflection of his already-virtuous self, reminding him of his "good deeds and words so that what is now a matter of natural impulse in you may become a matter of settled judgement."<sup>105</sup>

In nonprovidentialist forms of moral argumentation, we might expect considerations of *fortuna* and *natura* to tug the sovereign *persona* in divergent directions. In Seneca's theory, they align at a fundamental level. This basic fact can best be seen in his analysis of *clementia*. What marks out the prince's government as legitimate above all is its embodiment of the divinely rational principle governing the cosmos, which for Seneca is most clearly manifested in the prince's capacity for clemency, both toward his subjects and—interestingly enough—toward himself. In a pivotal passage, Seneca declares rather bluntly: "No one could conceive of anything more becoming to a ruler than mercy, whatever the manner of his accession to power and whatever its legal basis. We may, of course, acknowledge it to be the more beautiful and magnificent, the greater the power behind it—a power which ought not to be malign, if disposed in accordance with the law of nature."<sup>106</sup> For Seneca the only conceivable qualification for monarchical rule is moral, and the prince's adherence to the law of nature always trumps any concerns about his operation beyond the strictly legal. Freed from the restrictions of positive law, Seneca's

<sup>102</sup> The loci for Seneca's endorsement of these virtues in *De clementia* are as follows: for *mitis*, see 1.7.2, 1.11.1, 1.13.4, 1.22.3, 1.25.1; for *moderatio*, see 1.2.2, 1.11.1, 1.18.1, 1.19.4, 1.21.4, 2.3.2; for *temperantia*, see 1.7.4, 1.11.2, 1.12.4, 1.14.2, 1.20.2, 2.3.1, 2.4.2; for *mansuetudo*, see 1.7.3, 1.8.6, 1.11.1, 1.16.1, 2.2.1, 2.5.1; for *lenitas*, see 2.1.1, 2.2.3, 2.3.1, 2.5.3; for *humanitas*, see 1.2.2, 1.3.2; for *patientia*, see 1.14.1, 1.22.3.

<sup>103</sup> Seneca, *Clem.* 1.14.1: 120 (146): "Quod ergo officium eius est? Quod bonorum parentium."

<sup>104</sup> Seneca, *Clem.* 1.1.6: 96 (129–30): "Difficile hoc fuisset, si non naturalis tibi ista bonitas esset, sed ad tempus sumpta."

<sup>105</sup> Seneca, *Clem.* 2.2.2: (159): "quod bene factis dictisque tuis quam familiarissimum esse te cupio, ut, quod nunc natura et impetus est, fiat iudicium."

<sup>106</sup> Seneca, *Clem.* 1.19.1: 126 (150): "Excogitare nemo quicquam poterit, quod magis decorum regenti sit quam clementia, quocumque modo is et quocumque iure praepositus ceteris erit. Eo scilicet formosius id esse magnificentiusque fatebimur quo in maiore praestabitur potestate, quam non oportet noxiam esse si ad naturae legem componitur."

prince is instead subjected to another kind of law altogether: the law of nature, which governs the Stoic cosmos and which, Seneca insists, must also come to govern the prince's mind. We are told that "clemency has a freedom of decision: it judges not by legal formula but by what is equitable and good."<sup>107</sup> Clemency is a supralegal quality that aims at equity. When Seneca gives his five-point definition of the virtue in book 2, this characteristic emerges very clearly. *Clementia* is said to be a "moderation that remits something of a deserved and due punishment" and "something which stops short of what could deservedly be imposed."<sup>108</sup> In the interests of more equitable solutions, mercy remits punishment when justice, strictly interpreted as conformity to existing human law, might demand it. Anticipating objections that these formulations seem to encourage a certain slackness in ensuring that people are given their just deserts, Seneca immediately clarifies that it is wrong to think that clemency conflicts with justice in these moments: while it may remit a legally prescribed punishment, clemency is true justice duly observed—it understands justice as something applied in conformity with a universal kind of law rather than in conformity with any particular set of law codes.

Why does Seneca view the prince's possession of clemency above all the other virtues as essential to good monarchical government? There are two kinds of answers. One very clear argument originates in his observation about the omnipresence of human error. It must obviously make sense to want the person in whom supreme judicial authority is invested in political society to be fully capable of embodying this humane virtue when determining how to respond to infractions of the laws governing the body politic that he now heads. A failure on the part of the supreme magistrate to respond mercifully on occasion to injuries jeopardizes the smooth operation of political and social life. In fact, an unbendingly severe judge risks ruling over a wasteland, Seneca warns, decimating the population by the undifferentiated application of the most exacting penalties available in his legal decisions, an approach that clearly offends the basic tenet of Seneca's social theory.<sup>109</sup> This part of Seneca's discussion is further bolstered with a series of arguments that seek to prove that being merciful is not merely *dignum* but also *utile*: clemency is repeatedly said to bring the prince both glory and love, thus guaranteeing the longevity of his government.

But this functional line of reasoning acquires some philosophical depth in Seneca's metaphysics. For the exercise of mercy in judicial decisions shares in the same quality observable in the divine government of the cosmos:

If the gods, neither implacable nor unreasonable, are not given to pursuing the crimes of potentates immediately with their thunderbolts, how much more reasonable is it for a man set in authority over men to exercise his command [*imperium*] in a gentle spirit and to reflect: when is the world's state more pleasing to the eye and lovelier? On a day serene and bright? Or when all is shaken by frequent thunderbolts and the lightning flashes hither and thither? And yet the look of a calm, well-ordered empire is like that of the sky serene and shining.<sup>110</sup>

<sup>107</sup> Seneca, *Clem.* 2.7.3: 150 (my translation): "Clementia liberum arbitrium habet; non sub formula, sed ex aequo et bono iudicat."

<sup>108</sup> Seneca, *Clem.* 2.3.1–2: 142 (160): "(clementia est) temperantia animi in potestate ulciscendi"; "lenitas superioris adversus inferiorem in constituendis poenis"; "inclinatio animi ad lenitatem in poena exigenda"; "moderationem aliquid ex merita ac debita poena remittentem"; "quae se flectit citra id, quod merito constitui posset."

<sup>109</sup> For this point, see Inwood's illuminating discussion in *Reading Seneca*, 205–7.

<sup>110</sup> Seneca, *Clem.* 1.7.2: 106 (136): "Quod si di placabiles et aequi delicta potentium non statim fulminibus persequuntur, quanto aequius est hominem hominibus praepositum miti animo exercere imperium et cogitare, uter mundi status gratior oculis pulchriorque sit, sereno et puro die, an cum fragoribus crebris omnia quatiantur et ignes hinc atque illinc micant! Atqui non alia facies est quieti moratique imperii quam sereni caeli et nitentis."

Mercy is required of the lieutenant of the gods because it is a characteristic of the divine government of nature itself. There is perhaps a hint of the mimetic idea of representation at work in this analogy: as the vicegerent of the gods, the *imperium* of the prince over his subjects is supposed to resemble the *imperium* of the cosmos. Seneca is quite prepared to write the principle of monarchy into his metaphysics. We are told in *De beata vita* that “we are born in a kingdom; to obey god is freedom.”<sup>111</sup> And in *De clementia*, Seneca famously gives us a picture of a king bee as an example of the naturalness of monarchy.<sup>112</sup> But the proper exercise of *imperium* demands in addition a mastery of the kind of moral reasoning that, for Seneca, consists in the coherent meshing of *praecepta* and *decreta*. To be qualified for the kind of *imperium* that Seneca is talking about presupposes a sophisticated grasp of the impact of situational variability upon rational agency, and Seneca quite manifestly wishes to acclaim his clement *princeps* as a very close approximation indeed to the perfectly rational *vir sapiens*, or Stoic sage. That specification is arguably apparent all the way through book 1, especially in those passages in which princely acts of mercy are repeatedly applauded as divine; but it becomes explicit in book 2, during the course of which Seneca slowly but surely replaces the figure of the *princeps* with that of the *vir sapiens* as the protagonist in his discussion of true clemency and how to exercise it. Here it becomes clear that the clement prince of book 1 not only knows what the Stoic sage is said to know in book 2 but also does exactly what Seneca says the wise man will do. As Seneca puts it in the latter sections of book 2:

The wise man does nothing that he ought not to do and omits nothing that he ought to do. So he will not excuse a punishment which he ought to exact. . . . The wise man will spare men, take thought for them and reform them. He will do the same as he would if he forgave them—but without forgiving them, since to forgive is to confess that one has left undone something which ought to have been done. In one case, he may simply administer a verbal admonition without any punishment, seeing the man to be at an age still capable of correction. In another, where the man is patently labouring under an invidious accusation, he will order him to go scot-free, since he may have been misled or under the influence of alcohol. Enemies he will release unharmed, sometimes even commended, if they had an honourable reason—loyalty, a treaty, their freedom—to drive them to war. All these are works of mercy, not pardon. Mercy is a freedom of decision.<sup>113</sup>

But the need for just this kind of equitable navigation around various different types of cases, all of which call for clemency, is precisely what the prince in the prologue has grasped. As a consequence, he goes on to say that “I have been touched by the first flush of one person’s youthful-ness, by another’s extreme old age. I have granted pardon to one man because of his high position, to another because of his low estate.”<sup>114</sup> Note that his claim in the prologue is that he has “not been driven to unjust punishment,” not that he has been impelled not to punish at all.

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<sup>111</sup> Seneca, *De beata vita* 15.7: “In regno natis sumus; deo parere libertas est.”

<sup>112</sup> Seneca, *Clem.* 1.19.2.

<sup>113</sup> Seneca, *Clem.* 2.7.1–3: 148–50 (164): “sapiens autem nihil facit, quod non debet, nihil praetermittit, quod debet; itaque poenam, quam exigere debet, non donat. Sed illud, quod ex venia consequi vis, honestiore tibi via tribuet; parcat enim sapiens, consulat et corriget; idem faciet, quod, si ignosceret, nec ignoscet, quoniam, qui ignoscit, fatetur aliquid se, quod fieri debuit, omisisse. Aliquem verbis tantum admonebit, poena non adficiet aetatem eius emendabilem intuens; aliquem invidia criminis manifeste laborantem iubebit incolumem esse, quia deceptus est, quia per vinum lapsus; hostes dimittet salvos, aliquando etiam laudatos, si honestis causis pro fide, pro foedere, pro libertate in bellum acciti sunt. Haec omnia non veniae, sed clementiae opera sunt. Clementia liberum arbitrium habet.”

<sup>114</sup> See n. 1.

In Seneca's theory, the close identification of the *princeps* with the Stoic wise man serves to shrink the pool of plausible candidates for the position of governor of the entire human race in two main ways. First of all, it serves to make mastery of the propositional content of Seneca's theory of clemency merely the starting point of a princely political education. Given that the theory straightforwardly involves tailoring one's decisions to considerations of what natural reason—and therefore justice—require in certain circumstances to ensure equitable outcomes, the prince must also possess a certain degree of practical, as well as theoretical, knowledge.

Second, equating the prince with the wise man makes a very stringent set of conditions of self-mastery the background against which all the prince's virtuous activity must take place. Even in the most trying circumstances, Seneca's injunction is that the sovereign must "respond to damage openly inflicted upon himself by keeping his mind under control [*animum in potestate*], by remitting the punishment if he can safely do so . . . he should be far easier to placate when wronged himself than when others are wronged."<sup>115</sup> The fact that the prince needs to establish a form of *potestas* over his own mind to exercise his *potestas* correctly over others adds an additional layer of richness to Seneca's portrait of the sovereign *persona*. For Seneca maps out the interior world of the princely psyche as a realm of its own in which reason must establish its *imperium* by eliminating all those emotional perturbations of the soul regarded by the Stoics as diseased forms of thinking. The princely mind, we are told, must not fall under the irrational sway of greedy masters like avarice or ambition. But above all, it must not succumb to anger, the "most hideous and frenzied of all the emotions," as Seneca labels it in *De ira*, where it is defined as "a burning desire to avenge a wrong" or "a burning desire to punish him by whom you think yourself to have been unfairly harmed."<sup>116</sup> Anger is always entirely destructive in its consequences, but the *fortuna* of the prince places him in a position in which outbreaks of rage can be positively catastrophic. For if you are angry, you are liable to cruelty; and cruelty, for Seneca, is anger armed with the power of punishment and no self-control in exercising it. It is the defining mark of the tyrant.

Two elements of Seneca's theory of the emotions in *De ira* are discernible in his construction of the sovereign *persona*. In figuring the prince in the process of examining his conscience in *De clementia*, Seneca first of all demonstrates that the monarch has internalized the lessons of the earlier text, understanding the need to perform this ethical practice in order to place himself regularly before the *iudex of ratio*, the judge of reason, whose seat of judgment is in the mind.<sup>117</sup> In the case of both of the interior monologues that Seneca provides as examples of this practice of conscience—the first in *De ira*, where Seneca is advocating a regime of daily self-examination, and the second in the prologue of *De clementia*—the appeals to the internal judge of reason are described as acts of enumerating or returning "*ratio*," an account; but these accounts are framed entirely in fairly grandiloquent rhetorical speech.<sup>118</sup> In describing conscience as a matter of "daily

<sup>115</sup> Seneca, *Clem.* 1.20.2: 130 (152): "nunc illum hortamur, ut manifeste laesus animum in potestate habeat et poenam, si tuto poterit, donet, si minus, temperet longeque sit in suis quam in alienis iniuriis exorabilior."

<sup>116</sup> Seneca, *De ira* 1.1.1 (*Moral Essays*, 1:106): "scriberem quemadmodum posset ira leniri . . . hunc adfectum maxime ex omnibus taetrum ac rabidum." Translation from Seneca, *Moral Essays*, 1.17.

<sup>117</sup> For conscientious self-reflection envisaged as advocacy in a courtroom, see the extended description of self-interrogation in Seneca, *De ira* 3.36.1–38.2. For the idea of bringing our emotional states "before the judge" of our conscience, see *De ira* 3.36.2.

<sup>118</sup> Seneca, *De ira* 3.36.1 (*Moral Essays*, 3:338): "Omnes sensus perducendi sunt ad firmitatem; natura patientes sunt, si animus illos desit corrumpere, qui cotidie ad rationem reddendam uocandus est." Seneca, *Clem.* 1.1.4: 94: "Hodie dis immortalibus, si a me rationem repetant, adnumerare genus humanum paratus sum."

pleading my case at my own court,” Seneca inextricably links the idea of giving or rendering *ratio* with oratorical performance in this interior courtroom.<sup>119</sup>

Furthermore, the moral fine-tuning that such self-examination has engendered in the prince affords him one of his proudest boasts in the prologue: “I have never been driven to unjust punishment by anger or youthful impulse [*impetus*]”—that juvenile impetuosity which, Seneca reminds us a little later, made even the great Augustus “hot-headed in his youth,” when he “burned with anger,” “staining the sea at Actium with Roman blood.”<sup>120</sup> Seneca’s use of the word *impetus* here is interesting because it reveals a further relationship between *De clementia* and *De ira*. It is a technical term deployed by Seneca throughout his psychological theory as a translation of the Stoic term *hormē*. It describes the mental impulse to act after the mind has received an impression of and evaluated any given set of circumstances.<sup>121</sup> All actions, according to the Stoics, involve this mental event, so it is not the case at all that impulses per se are bad. Anger, however, is definitely an excessively unhelpful impulse that incites us to seek revenge because we have made a false evaluation of the situation at hand. But it happens only after the mind has done considerable cognitive work. Once we assent to the erroneous impression of having been wronged and that *impetus* is under way, it is virtually unstoppable. Seneca repeatedly likens this impetuous onrush of anger to an all-consuming fire, but he also frequently falls back upon the imagery of terrible weather conditions: anger is like gales or lightning or being “caught in a storm . . . carried along, enslaved by a raging malady.”<sup>122</sup> But we can halt the process beforehand if we can change our way of thinking. And the practice of conscience is designed to keep that thinking sharpened to the point of eradicating all such irrational impulses.

Seneca’s belief that there are never good grounds to react angrily to events is inextricably linked to his providentialism, a point that brings us to the question of why, from the prologue of the first book of *De clementia* to the last surviving chapter of the second, Seneca returns over and over again to the idea of *fortuna* and its relation to the rule of the prince. Given the determinism and providentialism of the Stoic universe, the centrality of the traditional Roman concept of *fortuna* to Seneca’s thought requires some explication.<sup>123</sup> We are reminded by Elizabeth Asmis that, during the Imperial period, the idea of fortune remained “entrenched in Roman thought as a powerful presence in daily life,” and images of the goddess *Fortuna* became “very widespread,” particularly on coins and gems, where the character of her government over human affairs was depicted by showing her in the presence of three principal attributes: a rudder, sometimes at-

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<sup>119</sup> Seneca, *De ira* 1.36.3 (*Moral Essays*, 1:340): “Utor hac potestate et cotidie apud me causam dico.” Translation from Seneca, *Moral Essays*, 1:110.

<sup>120</sup> Seneca, *Clem.* 1.1.3: 94 (128): “In hac tanta facultate rerum non ira me ad iniqua supplicia compulit, non iuvenilis impetus.” *Clem.* 1.11.1: 114 (142): “Haec Augustus senex aut iam in senectutem annis vergentibus; in adulescentia caluit, arsit ira . . . fuerit moderatus et clemens, nempe post mare Actiacum Romano cruore infectum.”

<sup>121</sup> For the role of impulse in Stoic psychological theory, see Tad Brennan, *The Stoic Life* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005), 82–113.

<sup>122</sup> Seneca, *De ira* 3.3.3 (*Moral Essays*, 3:258): “uelut tempestate correptus non it sed agitur et furenti malo seruit.” Translation from Seneca, *Moral Essays*, 3:79. For the imagery of gales and lightning, see *De ira* 3.1.4.

<sup>123</sup> For the figure of *Fortuna* in Seneca’s political thought, see Stacey, *Roman Monarchy*, 65–72. The latest discussion is Elizabeth Asmis, “Seneca on Fortune and the Kingdom of God,” in *Senecan Self*, ed. Bartsch and Wray, 115–38 (esp. 128–32 for its deployment in *De clementia*).

tached to a globe; a cornucopia; and a wheel (an image that goes back to Pindar, subsequently emerges as the *fortuna rota* in Cicero, and later is famously developed by Boethius).<sup>124</sup>

Seneca uses the word entirely consistently and coherently throughout his writing in two very distinctive ways. On the one hand, Seneca equates *fortuna* with providential *ratio*. This usage is explained most clearly in *De providentia*, where Seneca goes to some length to uphold the orthodox Stoic doctrine that “the world is governed by Providence”—and that nothing, therefore, occurs in life *sine ratio*—in the face of the common objection that, as he puts it, “many bad things happen to good people.”<sup>125</sup> Seneca’s argument is simply that contingency in human affairs is apparent rather than real.<sup>126</sup> He rehearses this fundamental perspective in *De beneficiis*, saying that “you can call on Nature, Fate or Fortune” variously to talk about divine reason because “all are names of one and the same god variously exercising his power.”<sup>127</sup> Here Fortune is personified by Seneca as divine, rational, and male. This meaning of *fortuna* is intended repeatedly throughout *De clementia*. In the prologue, the person of Nero tells us that, given his role as vicegerent of the gods, “all dispensations of *Fortuna* to mortals are made through pronouncements on my lips.”<sup>128</sup> As a man of supreme virtue, Nero—the benevolent, paternal, and loving father figure—is the arbiter of mankind’s fortunes. As god’s vicegerent, the prince determines the *fortuna* of each and every human being in accordance with reason. This function exactly parallels the relationship between Nero and the gods: Nero’s *fortuna* is fixed, allotted, divinely determined. This is why Seneca reminds Nero that “you cannot escape your *fortuna*: it besieges you.”<sup>129</sup>

Nevertheless, although nothing is remotely fortuitous in Seneca’s moral universe, Seneca still uses the idea of *fortuna* to express adversity and ordinary beliefs about good and bad luck, regularly talking about *bona fortuna* and *mala fortuna*. In so doing he adopts the Roman notion of *fortuna* as a blind, irrational, and capricious force to describe, in conversational style, an ordinary aspect of moral life. Seneca agrees that life is full of difficulties, and we all face sudden, apparently inexplicable reversals of good and bad luck. But life’s apparent adversities and injustices, in truth, all have a rational cause and therefore a rational explanation. A sufficiently wise man will come to see that such setbacks or sudden advantages are not, in fact, implacably opposed to the exercise of reason and virtue but should be viewed as opportunities for demonstrations of virtue that are furnished providentially. The relationship between God and man is strenuous: God is like a “magnificent parent, and no mild task-master of the virtues.”<sup>130</sup> For Seneca, moral progress

<sup>124</sup> Asmis, “Seneca on Fortune,” 118. See also David M. Robinson, “The Wheel of Fortune,” *Classical Philology* 41 (1946): 207–16. The Ciceronian reference is *In Pisonem* 22.

<sup>125</sup> Seneca, *De providentia* 1.1 (*Moral Essays*, 1:2): “Quaesisti a me, Lucili, quid ista, si providentia mundus regeretur, multa bonis viris mala acciderent.”

<sup>126</sup> Seneca, *De providentia* 1.3 (*Moral Essays*, 1:4): “Ne illa quidem quae videntur confusa et incerta. . . sine ratione, quamvis subita sint, accidunt.”

<sup>127</sup> Seneca, *De beneficiis* 4.8.3 (*Moral Essays*, 3:220): “Sic nunc naturam voca, fatum, fortunam; omnia eiusdem dei nomina sunt varie utentis sua potestate.”

<sup>128</sup> Seneca, *Clem.* 1.1.2: 94 (128): “quid cuique mortalium Fortuna datum velit, meo ore pronuntiat.” The same idea is expressed in connection with Augustus’s imperial power in Seneca, *De brevitate vitae* 4.4. Braund capitalizes “Fortuna” here to capture the personification at work in *De clementia* (see her note on p. 162); here, and elsewhere, I replace “fortune” with “Fortuna” in translations of passages of Seneca and subsequent humanist texts where the personification seems clearly intended.

<sup>129</sup> Seneca, *Clem.* 1.8.2: 106 (137): “Aberrare a fortuna tua non potes; obsidet te.”

<sup>130</sup> Seneca, *De providentia* 1.5 (*Moral Essays*, 1:6): “parens ille magnificus, uirtutum non lenis exactor, sicut seueri patres, durius educat.”

must be tough because *virtus* needs to be put to the test in order to flourish. It “shrivels without an adversary.”<sup>131</sup> The consequence of the demands made upon men who are good is that they “labour and sweat, ascend through toil” to the heights of moral virtue.<sup>132</sup> The moral of this story is summarized in a *dictum* that was to be of extraordinary importance to Renaissance political thought: “a wise person conquers fortune by virtue.”<sup>133</sup>

Seneca’s work furnishes us with extremely ornate depictions of such experiences as belligerent engagements in which the wise man proves himself to be *invictus*, morally victorious over a female enemy. Seneca consistently uses “*fortuna*” to depict and personify an irrational and hostile agent that appears to confront us and challenge our ability to think and see clearly. The wise man understands that “death, imprisonment, burning, and all the other missiles of *Fortuna* . . . are not evils, but only seem to be.”<sup>134</sup> *Fortuna* can seem to be “waging war” on you, but you must not be overcome and enslaved by this apparent enemy of virtue.<sup>135</sup> The wise man is “unerring in judgement, unshaken, unafraid, who may be moved but never perturbed by the use of force—a man whom *Fortuna*, when she hurls at him with all her might the deadliest missile in her armoury, may graze, though rarely, but never wound. For *Fortuna*’s other missiles, with which she vanquishes mankind in general, rebound from such a man.”<sup>136</sup> Indeed, Seneca says, we need this level of hostility to put us properly to the test and so ensure that, like a gladiator who meets a decent adversary, we have a chance to win glory. *Fortuna*, he tells us, “seeks out the bravest men as her equals; some she passes by with disdain. . . . It is only evil *Fortuna* that discovers a great example.”<sup>137</sup>

*Fortuna* comes to embody all the irrational elements that Senecan political thought tyrannizes. She is said to preside over slaves in the cruelest of kingdoms. *Fortuna* possesses a *regnum* that the wise man should despise.<sup>138</sup> She rules over it with a perverse *ius*: her jurisdiction is that of a *dominus* over a *servus*.<sup>139</sup> She is “like a mistress that is changeable and passionate and neglectful of her slaves,” for “she will be capricious in both her rewards and her punishments.”<sup>140</sup> But a wise man “always possesses an undiminished and stable liberty, being free and his own master

<sup>131</sup> Seneca, *De providentia* 2.4 (*Moral Essays*, 1:8): “Marcet sine adversario virtus.”

<sup>132</sup> Seneca, *De providentia* 1.6 (*Moral Essays*, 1:6): “Itaque cum videris bonos viros acceptosque diis laborare, sudare, per arduum escendere, malos autem lascivire et voluptatibus.”

<sup>133</sup> Seneca, *Epistulae morales* 71.30 (2:90): “Sapiens quidem vincit virtutem fortunam.”

<sup>134</sup> Seneca, *Epistulae morales* 85.26 (2:300): “Quid ergo? . . . mortem, vincula, ignes, alia tela fortunae non timebat? Non. Scit[sc. vir sapiens] enim illa non esse mala, sed videri.”

<sup>135</sup> Seneca, *Epistulae morales* 51.8 (1:340): “Fortuna mecum bellum gerit.”

<sup>136</sup> Seneca, *Epistulae morales* 45.9 (1:296): “certus iudicii, inconcussus, intrepidus, quem aliqua vis movet, nulla perturbat, quem fortuna, cum quod habuit telum nocentissimum vi maxima intorsit, pungit, non vulnerat, et hoc raro. Nam cetera eius tela, quibus genus humanum debellatur, grandinis more dissulant, quae incussa tectis sine ullo habitatoris incommodo crepitat ac solvitur.”

<sup>137</sup> Seneca, *De providentia* 3.4 (*Moral Essays*, 1:16): “Ignominiam iudicat gladiator cum inferiore componi et scit eum sine gloria uinci qui sine periculo uincitur. Idem facit fortuna: fortissimos sibi pares quaerit, quosdam fastidio transit. Contumacissimum quemque et rectissimum adgreditur, aduersus quem uim suam intendat: ignem experitur in Mucio, paupertatem in Fabricio, exilium in Rutilio, tormenta in Regulo, uenenum in Socrate, mortem in Catone. Magnum exemplum nisi mala fortuna non inuenit.”

<sup>138</sup> For the *regnum* of *Fortuna*, see, e.g., *De breuitate vitae* 10.4; *De vita beata* 25.5.

<sup>139</sup> For the extent of her jurisdiction, see Seneca, *De breuitate vitae* 10.2 (*Moral Essays*, 2:316): “Hoc est enim in quod fortuna ius perdidit”; Seneca, *Epistulae morales* 36.6 (1:248): “In mores fortuna ius non habet.”

<sup>140</sup> Seneca, *De consolatione ad Marciam* 10.6 (*Moral Essays*, 2:32): “Ut varia et libidinosa mancipiorumque suorum negligens domina et poenis et muneribus errabit.”

and towering above all others. For who can possibly be above him who is above *Fortuna*?<sup>141</sup> It is only “when one strays away from Nature” that “one is compelled to crave, and fear, and be a slave to the things of chance. We may return to the true path; we may be restored to our proper state; let us therefore be so, in order that we may be able to endure pain, in whatever form it attacks our bodies and say to *Fortuna*: ‘You have to deal with a Man; seek someone whom you can conquer!’”<sup>142</sup> For Seneca, the capacity to withstand these assaults depends on our cultivation of *virtus* as an inner fortification against outer attack. In his *Letters*, Seneca advises:

Gird yourself about with philosophy, an impregnable wall. Though it be assaulted by many engines, *Fortuna* can find no passage into it. The soul stands on unassailable ground, if it has abandoned external things; it is independent in its own fortress, and every weapon that is hurled falls short of the mark. *Fortuna* has not the long reach with which we credit her; she can seize none except him that clings to her. Let us then recoil from her as far as we are able. This will be possible for us only through knowledge of self and of Nature.<sup>143</sup>

Seneca associates this ability to fend off the assaults of *Fortuna* not with physical fortitude but with an inner, mental strength and with the virtue of magnanimity above all others. For Seneca, magnanimity is *eminentissima*, the loftiest of all the virtues. In *De constantia* he had made magnanimity the crowning virtue of the *vir sapiens*.<sup>144</sup> And in *De ira*, Seneca had laid out the psychological basis of acts of magnanimity with great clarity: “The mark of true greatness is not to feel the blow. . . . Not to be angry is to be unshaken by wrong done to one; to succumb to anger is to become agitated. But he whom I have raised above all annoyance has embraced the supreme good and can reply not to man alone but to Fortune herself: ‘Do all that you will, you are too insignificant to cloud my serenity. Reason forbids it, and I have entrusted my life to reason’s governance.’”<sup>145</sup> This description of the magnanimous man is imported into the political theory of *De clementia*, where Seneca asserts that “the characteristic of a great mind is to be peaceful and calm, looking down from above at injuries or affronts,” and that “it is for women to rave in anger, for wild beasts . . . to bite and worry the fallen.”<sup>146</sup> As we have seen, Seneca associates magnanimity with the power to “beat back the force of ill *fortuna*.”<sup>147</sup> For “a great mind is an adornment to a

<sup>141</sup> Seneca, *De brevitate vitae* 5.3 (*Moral Essays*, 2:300): “sapiens . . . numquam semiliber erit, integrae semper libertatis et solidae, solutus et sui iuris et altior ceteris. Quid enim supra eum potest esse, qui supra fortunam est?”

<sup>142</sup> Seneca, *Epistulae morales* 98.14 (3:126): “Quidquid fieri potuit potest, nos modo purgemus animum sequamurque naturam, a qua aberranti cupiendum timendumque est et fortuitis serviendum. Licet reverti in viam, licet in integrum restitui: restituamur, ut possimus dolores quocumque modo corpus invaserint perferre et fortunae dicere ‘cum viro tibi negotium est: quaere quem vincas.’”

<sup>143</sup> Seneca, *Epistulae morales* 82.5 (2:242): “Philosophia circumdanda est, inexpugnabilis murus, quem fortuna multis machinis lacessitum non transit. In insuperabili loco stat animus, qui externa deseruit, et arce se sua vindicat; infra illum omne telum cadit. Neminem occupat nisi haerentem sibi. Itaque quantum possumus, ab illa resiliamus; quod sola praestabit sui naturaeque cognitio.”

<sup>144</sup> See Seneca, *De constantia* 11.1.

<sup>145</sup> Seneca, *De ira* 3.25.4 (*Moral Essays*, 1:318): “At ille quem modo altiore omni incommodo posui tenet amplexu quodam summum bonum, nec homini tantum sed ipsi fortunae respondet: ‘omnia licet facias, minor es quam ut serenitatem meam obducas. Vetat hoc ratio, cui uitam regendam dedi.’” Translation from Seneca, *Moral and Political Essays*, 79.

<sup>146</sup> Seneca, *Clem.* 1.5.5: 104 (134): “magni autem animi proprium est placidum esse tranquillumque et iniurias atque offensiones superne despiciere. Muliebri est furere in ira, ferarum vero nec generosarum quidem praemordere et urguere proiectos.”

<sup>147</sup> Seneca, *Clem.* 1.5.3: 102 (134): “Decet magnanimitas quemlibet mortalem, etiam illum, infra quem nihil est; quid enim maius aut fortius quam malam fortunam retundere?”

great *fortuna*, but it must rise to it and stand above it, or else bring down *fortuna*, too, to the ground.”<sup>148</sup> The magnanimous prince looks down on apparent misfortune and *iniuria* with equanimity, gloriously unperturbed by the petty injustices perpetrated against his person by ordinary mortals.

Here, then, are the imaginative elements of Seneca’s philosophy that help bring a good deal of definition and content to his depiction of the psychological life of the sovereign *persona*, armed with the necessary virtues to ensure that he remains master of his own interior realm and never a captive slave in the realm of *Fortuna*. As ironic as it may at first seem to find a Stoic providentialist so obsessed with a mere figment of the diseased imagination, Seneca’s decision to keep the capricious goddess alive in his writing allows him to do some important diagnostic work in his moral philosophy, and in terms easily comprehensible to his audience. Except in the rarest case of a Stoic sage, no one’s vision of the providential scheme at work in the cosmos can ever be entirely perfect. There are conflicts, diseases, disasters, and seemingly premature deaths in Nature’s scheme that disrupt individuals’ lives, and it is hard for anyone to see the bigger picture. We daily battle with an incorrigibly irrational propensity to attribute a bad nature to such events when in fact their bad nature is merely a result of our failure to conquer those feelings that interfere with our reception of the correct state of affairs in the world. The battle with *Fortuna* in the world is an externalized projection of the interior struggle for self-conquest—a battle in which the prince must be shown to be invincible if he is to be considered truly sovereign.

### PART III

The question of how a political theory embedded within a patently materialist philosophy such as Stoicism should have thrived so continuously in a Christian culture requires a considerably more complex answer than I am able to give here.<sup>149</sup> Much of the explanation involves recognizing the massive ideological advantages, in terms of the sheer degree of power, that *De clementia* offered to any monarch who could claim to identify himself as Seneca’s princely *persona*. Seneca’s argument that moral qualifications should be considered the only authoritative basis of political sovereignty proved immensely useful to the Renaissance *signori* who began to assert their princely status over previously self-governing communes in northern Italy in the duecento and whose legal claims to the positions that they had assumed, often by means of military conquest, were often less than robust.

But an equally crucial aspect of the explanation consists in recalling, with Nietzsche, that the New Testament, like *De clementia* itself, is “the book of mercy”; and while Christianity succeeded in turning *misericordia*, or pity—the vice of lachrymose old women, as far as Seneca was concerned—into the most divine virtue of all in the wake of the Fall, it continued to place an exceptionally high premium on the quality of *clementia*: no fewer than eight popes took the name of Clement before 1600.<sup>150</sup> This fact, in tandem with the well-known process of Christianization that the “saintly Seneca” underwent in the medieval period and that continued with the human-

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<sup>148</sup> Seneca, *Clem.* 1.5.3–5: 102–4 (134): “Haec tamen magnanimitas in bona fortuna laxiorem locum habet meliusque in tribunali quam in plano conspicitur. . . . Magnam fortunam magnus animus decet, qui, nisi se ad illam extulit et altior stetit, illam quoque infra ad terram deducit.”

<sup>149</sup> A longer version is given in Stacey, *Roman Monarchy*, 75–115.

<sup>150</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, ed. Rolf-Peter Horstmann and Judith Norman, trans. Judith Norman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 48. For Seneca on pity as the petty vice of “senile or silly women,” see Seneca, *Clem.* 2.5.1.

ists from Gasparino Barzizza to Justus Lipsius helped secure Seneca's political thought, already wedded to the benign providentialism of Stoic theology, an even more hospitable conceptual environment in which to thrive.<sup>151</sup> Furthermore, we need to bear in mind that the basic narrative underpinning *De clementia's* description of sovereign power was that of a loving father figure powerfully intervening in the lives of his subjects to save them from their own self-destructive tendencies. As such, it was a deeply familiar kind of story to Christians.

One further characteristic of Seneca's philosophy made it adaptable to its new Christian setting: it was studded with sufficiently disparaging comments about the range of objects designated by the Stoics as indifferent—health, wealth, social position, and so on—to enable Christian readers to marshal it into a positively antimaterialist perspective and align it with the fundamentally Platonic type of dualism that they found in Augustine. In fact, Seneca becomes the author of a tract named *De paupertate*, an amalgam of excerpts from letters 1–88 of the *Epistulae morales*, which helped secure his popularity as an advocate of voluntary poverty from the twelfth century onward in monastic circles.<sup>152</sup> Notwithstanding Seneca's firmly Stoic ontology, his work is packed with imagery expressing contempt for the body. As Shadi Bartsch points out in her analysis of Seneca's metaphors, his descriptions of the interior space of the soul consistently involve him in a corresponding attack on the body, which is “repeatedly denigrated as a jail, a weight, a drawback . . . a prison from which only philosophy—and death—let the soul escape . . . a rotting home, a thing to be jettisoned.”<sup>153</sup> The ontological shift required for this kind of account to flourish involved transmuting the material of the Stoic psyche into something less consubstantial with the body. And the fact that this operation was performed in the course of the transmission of Seneca's thought is charmingly illustrated in one fifteenth-century Senecan manuscript in which we see the soul of the Stoic, depicted in the familiar iconography of a saint, carried up to heaven by an angel.<sup>154</sup> In this Christian universe, Senecan lessons about self-rule could continue to be applied to the soul, now partitioned and with no hope of eradicating entirely the emotions but dedicated nevertheless to the Stoic philosopher's precepts as a valuable guide to self-subjection and self-mastery.

### *Seneca and the Jurists*

Bodin was hardly the first French legal theorist of the sixteenth century to cultivate a demonstrably intimate familiarity with the theory of the prince in Seneca's *De clementia*. An unprecedentedly detailed commentary had been supplied, along with a new edition of the text, a generation earlier by the young Jean Calvin, who probably commenced his work on Seneca while in his final year of

<sup>151</sup> For the Christian Seneca in Barzizza's thought, see Stacey, *Roman Monarchy*, 174–76; for Lipsius and the “virtually Christian” Seneca, see Jill Krayer, “The Humanist as Moral Philosopher: Marc-Antoine Muret's 1585 Edition of Seneca,” in *Moral Philosophy on the Threshold of Modernity*, ed. J. Krayer and R. Saarin (Dordrecht: Springer, 2005), 327.

<sup>152</sup> For Seneca among the monks, see L. D. Reynolds, *The Medieval Tradition of Seneca's Letters* (London: Oxford University Press, 1965), 104–7, 113; Gilles Gerard Meerseman, “Seneca maestro di spiritualità nei suoi opuscoli apocrifi dal XII al XV secolo,” *Italia medioevale e umanistica* 16 (1973): 45–46, 117–28.

<sup>153</sup> Shadi Bartsch, “Senecan Metaphor and Stoic Self-Instruction,” in *Senecan Self*, ed. Bartsch and Wray, 188–217, 202.

<sup>154</sup> Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vat. lat. 7319, 191r. The scene is discussed and illustrated in Luisa Franchi Dell'Orto, “Sull'iconografia di Seneca,” in *Seneca: Mostra bibliografica e iconografica*, ed. Francesca Niutta and Carmel Santucci (Rome: Fratelli Palombi, 1999), 31.

studying Roman law at Bourges in 1529.<sup>155</sup> Calvin's decision to lavish such attention on Seneca's treatise rather than on some more obviously pertinent classical work of law has been thought to require a particular kind of explanation. One suggestion put forward by his most recent Anglophone editors is that Calvin was eager to prove his humanist credentials upon the arrival in Bourges of Andrea Alciati, the famous Italian jurist who had taken up the chair in Calvin's department in 1529 and who brought to the university the values of a jurisprudential tradition steeped in Renaissance philology and historical criticism.<sup>156</sup> Calvin's turn to Seneca, then, might best be linked to his ambitions as a young intellectual, rising to the challenge of trying to improve upon the scholarly standard laid down by Erasmus in his famous second edition of *De clementia*, which had been published that same year. Calvin himself avers to this aspiration in his introduction to the edition, thus inserting himself into a distinguished humanist tradition of Senecan scholarship that would culminate in Justus Lipsius's magisterial work on the text.

There is a great deal of truth in this account of the development of Calvin's humanist interests. His commentary's attentiveness in particular to the complexity of the rhetorical codes that abound in Seneca's argument amply substantiates the young lawyer's claims to have new insights into a text whose stylistic devices had been scrutinized and imitated for centuries by humanists. But it is important nevertheless not to overstate the novelty of this jurist's interest in *De clementia*. One hardly needed to be a humanist to have a passion for Seneca, after all. Given that Seneca's sovereign *persona* was constructed as the embodiment of Stoic *ratio*, the theory of *De clementia* could be effectively spliced in such a way as to make it contribute to a discussion of the prince conducted less in terms of his *virtus* and more in terms of his adherence to the *lex naturalis*. In fact, Seneca's theory of monarchy had already been picked over for centuries within at least one particular juridical tradition by civilian lawyers who had long been involved in deploying *De clementia* in the formation of a markedly absolutist royal ideology. This school of jurists took as their point of departure the document that provided the fundamental framework of public law within the Kingdom of Sicily from the reign of Frederick II down to the Napoleonic era: the so-called *Constitutions of Melfi*, three books of legal codes issued in 1231. As Marongiu and Kantorowicz noted, the prologue to Frederick's *Constitutions of Melfi* refers to the very same speech in the preamble of Seneca's *De clementia* that Bodin was to cite later, placing the words of Seneca's emperor into the mouth of his medieval descendant:<sup>157</sup>

By this compelling necessity of things, and not less by the inspiration of divine providence, princes of nations were created, so that through their agency unbridled wickedness might be restrained; so that, as arbiters of life and death for mankind, they might decide—as if executors, so to speak, of divine providence—the fortune, lot, and condition of every person; and so that from their own hands they might be able to render account perfectly of the stewardship committed to them.<sup>158</sup>

<sup>155</sup> See Calvin's *Commentary on Seneca's "De Clementia,"* ed. and trans. Ford Lewis Battles and André Malan Hugo (Leiden: Brill, 1969).

<sup>156</sup> For this historical background, see *ibid.*, 34–35.

<sup>157</sup> Ernst Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1957), 116, esp. n. 85. For Antonio Marongiu's repeated discussion of this Senecan passage, see his articles collected in Marongiu, *Byzantine, Norman, Swabian and Later Institutions in Southern Italy* (London: Variorum, 1972), as chaps. 10, 11, and 13 (the references to the use of Seneca in the *Constitutions* are at 42, 297–301, 315).

<sup>158</sup> *Constitutionum regni Siciliarum libri III*, ed. Andrea Romano, 2 vols. (Soveria Manelli, Catanzaro: Rubettino, 1999), 1:4: "Sicque ipsa rerum necessitate cogente, nec minus divine provisionis instinctu principes gentium sunt creati per quos posset licentia scelerum coerceri; qui vite necisque arbitri gentibus qualem quisque fortunam, sortem, statumque

The Sicilian monarch thus starts to incorporate the *persona* of the Senecan monarch. When glossing this passage penned by Piero della Vigna, Frederick II's principal logothete, Marino da Caramanico declared, "these are the words of Seneca in the first book of *De clementia* to Nero, where he says: 'Have I, of all mortals, found favor and been chosen to act on earth in place of the gods? I am the arbiter of life and death over peoples.'"<sup>159</sup> Already inscribed on the most important document of public law in the Kingdom, the relevant part of Seneca's prologue was now underlined in Marino's commentary, which soon became the *glossa ordinaria* of the legislation and accompanied the text of the Sicilian constitution in both manuscript and print form into the eighteenth century. Seneca's *De clementia* quickly became a favored hunting ground for political doctrine. Three other highly distinguished jurists similarly involved in defining the extent of royal power in the *Regno* in the fourteenth century—Bartolomeo da Capua, Andrea da Isernia, and Luca da Penna—resorted to quoting various other passages from *De clementia*, as well as from Seneca's *De ira*, *De beneficiis*, and *Epistulae morales*, "over and over again" in their legal writings.<sup>160</sup> For at least a hundred years after Melfi, until the time of Petrarch, the main idiom in which political theory was articulated in the Kingdom was juridical, and the most outstanding contributions to a theory of royal government were made across three generations by these distinguished civilian lawyers. Furthermore, as Kantorowicz carefully underlined, "their philosopher was not Aristotle, but Seneca and his ideal of the 'Sage.'"<sup>161</sup> Their predilection for Seneca lay in the fact that the Stoic philosopher was reckoned to be, in the words of Andrea da Isernia, "the finest jurist, as is patently clear to anyone who has read him."<sup>162</sup> They effortlessly transferred Senecan doctrine into the juridical field, resorting explicitly to the relevant passages of *De clementia* to develop the idea of the *princeps* as the *pater patriae* and as the head and soul of the body of the princely *res publica*.<sup>163</sup>

If we return to Bodin, working within the natural law tradition considerably later, we find not only Seneca's strictures about the paternal power of the prince but also the psychological apparatus of *De clementia* playing an indispensable part in his argument about absolute sovereignty. In book 1 of *Six livres de la République*, Bodin writes:

Some amongst the markes of Soveraignty, have also put the power to judge and decide matters, according to their conscience; a thing common to all judges, if they be not by expresse law or custome prohibited so to doe. And that is it for which wee oftentimes see in the edicts upon the articles committed to the arbitrarie judgement of the judges, this clause added, *Wherewith we have charged our conscience*. For if there be either custome or law to the contrarie, it then is not in the power of the judge, to passe beyond the law, or to dispute against the received law . . . whereas a soveraigne prince may do both, if he be not by the law of God forbidden; whereunto we have showed him to be still subject.<sup>164</sup>

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haberet, velut executores quodammodo divine Providentie stabilirent, de quorum manibus ut villicationis sibi commisse perfecte reddere valeant rationem."

<sup>159</sup> Ibid., n. h: "Statumque haberet. Ista verba sunt Seneca, primo de clementia, ad Neronem ubi dicit: Ego ne ex omnibus mortalibus placui, electusque sum, quod in terris Deorum vice fungerer? Ego vitae necisque arbiter gentibus: qualem quisque sortem statumque habeat, in manu mea positum est: quod cuique mortalium fortuna datum velit, meo ore pronunciat." For further discussion, see Stacey, *Roman Monarchy*, 75–116.

<sup>160</sup> Kantorowicz, *King's Two Bodies*, 116n85.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid., 473n56.

<sup>162</sup> For "Seneca optimus iurista," see *ibid.*

<sup>163</sup> For some examples of their citations, see *ibid.*, 440n405, 215n65.

<sup>164</sup> Bodin, *Six Bookes*, 181 (bk. 1, chap. 10).

The basic structure of Bodin's argument about absolutism is well known: the sovereign prince is entirely unfettered by the letter of positive law, but he is strictly bound to the dictates of natural law. But the classical foundations for this view have hardly been observed at all. We are told, on the contrary, that Bodin "introduced" to absolutist theory the form in which it subsequently developed; that his work is "a fundamental starting point for modern thought" on the subject; and that "a legal path was opened to autocracy" as a consequence.<sup>165</sup> But these views rest on an account of the shape of Renaissance intellectual and ideological debts to classical political thought that has eclipsed the part played by Seneca's theory of the prince in legitimating autocracy and absolutism in the preceding centuries. Bodin was manifestly no Stoic, of course; and he continues to distinguish between natural law and God's law (notwithstanding his marked tendency to run the two together and argue that the latter is underpinned by the former). But he knew the argument about absolutism in *De clementia* intimately; he certainly agrees with Seneca that "a royal monarch or king is he which placed in sovereignty yeeldeth himselfe as obedient unto the lawes of nature"; and he is virtually paraphrasing Seneca in his insistence that "all princes are more straitly bound than their subjects" to "the law of God and nature" on the grounds that "they must bee enforced to make their appearance before the tribunall seat of almightie God: for God taketh a straiter account of princes than of others."<sup>166</sup> In fact, he fleshes out this part of his theory by turning to Seneca's notion of princely government as a form of servitude in order to counter the view that sovereign princes are permitted to do what they like: "How much more truely did Seneca say to the contrarie, *Caesari omnia licent, propter hoc minus licet*, When all things are unto Caesar lawfull, even for that they are less lawfull."<sup>167</sup>

### *Seneca and the Humanists*

While Seneca's political theory proved a fertile hunting ground for postclassical jurists, the debts to *De clementia* that Renaissance humanists from Petrarch to Lipsius displayed in their writings on princely government ran far deeper than a dependency on doctrine. Their depiction of the sovereign person was articulated in a political and moral language that was as attentive to the style of the philosopher as to the substance of his account. Petrarch read Seneca's philosophy on a daily basis with an "unbelievable degree of attentiveness," as he himself professed.<sup>168</sup> One consequence of his immersion in Seneca's work was that Petrarch's rearticulation of the Senecan lessons about monarchy was presented in a language that extensively and creatively elaborated much of the imagery in which Seneca had couched his theory. Perhaps the most obvious example of this relationship is observable in Petrarch's outstandingly Senecan treatment of the subject of *Fortuna*. Petrarch saw clearly that, since Seneca's sovereign was modeled on the *vir sapiens*, the entire corpus of Seneca's philosophy could be used to embroider the narrative of the encounter between the prince and the capricious goddess; and we find him doing so across a body of work on princely rule that extends from the 1340s to the 1370s. Since Letizia Panizza's pioneering article on the subject, we have become accustomed to treat *De remediis utriusque fortunae* (1354–66), Petrarch's most sustained piece of thinking about the role of "both kinds of *fortuna*" in hu-

<sup>165</sup> Julian Franklin, *Jean Bodin and the Rise of Absolutist Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), vii, 1, 108, 103. I owe this point to Anna Becker.

<sup>166</sup> Bodin, *Six Bookes*, 204 (bk. 2, chap. 3), 104 (bk. 1, chap. 8).

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.*, 104 (bk. 1, chap. 8) (citing Seneca, *Ad Polybium* 7.2).

<sup>168</sup> For this point and the citation (*Fam.* 24.5), see Christopher Celenza, "Petrarch, Latin and Italian Renaissance Latinity," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 35, no. 3 (2005): 513.

man affairs, as a work of neo-Stoic psychotherapy, and for very good reasons: in the 253 dialogues of the book, we find *Ratio* engaged in overcoming the diseased points of view presented to it by the four principal passions, similarly personified, about the apparent effects, both good and bad, of *Fortuna* upon the course of human life.<sup>169</sup> The entire text is a dramatic illustration of the kind of continuous interior monologue that Petrarch thinks we must sustain in order to evaluate correctly the moral significance of the benefits and difficulties placed before us by external circumstances. For “those afflicted by false opinions must be healed by true maxims” in order to resist being blown about by passional dispositions when plotting a course through life.<sup>170</sup> The title of the work is derived from a pseudo-Senecan treatise called *De remediis fortuitarum*, which is first mentioned by Tertullian and which continued to circulate throughout the Renaissance into the printing age.<sup>171</sup> In his preface to book 1 Petrarch acknowledges the importance of this particular Senecan text to his way of thinking about the problems that we confront in the face of seemingly good luck. The “unpredictable and sudden changes of human affairs” are presented as an “ever present war with *Fortuna* in which only virtue can make us victorious.”<sup>172</sup> But *Fortuna* has two faces, and we therefore need “a potent antidote against a double disease.”<sup>173</sup> As he broaches his topic, Petrarch warns that “I have seen many who have steadfastly endured losses, poverty, exile, imprisonment, torture, death, and grave illnesses,” but that “I have yet to see one who could bear well riches, honors, and power.”<sup>174</sup> So often we see “those who had stood undefeated against all violence of adverse *Fortuna* overthrown by prosperous *Fortuna* as if it were child’s play, her flatteries overcoming the strength of a mind.”<sup>175</sup> He goes on: “In a rather brief essay, Seneca also touched on that aspect of *Fortuna* which he deemed the most difficult to cope with and which, at first sight, is doubtless the rougher of the two. His book is now in everybody’s hands, and I do not intend to add anything or criticize anything in it, because the work of such a great thinker does not need my emendations.”<sup>176</sup> The *modestia* of Petrarch’s proem barely masks the creative work that we see him immediately undertaking as he starts to draw upon the full corpus of Senecan philosophy in his depiction of the war with *Fortuna*. The use of *De clemen-*

<sup>169</sup> Letizia A. Panizza, “Stoic Psychotherapy in the Middle Ages and Renaissance: Petrarch’s *De remediis*,” in *Atoms, Pneuma and Tranquillity*, ed. Margaret J. Osler (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 39–65.

<sup>170</sup> Francesco Petrarca, *De remediis utriusque fortunae* (Augsburg, 1532; repr. with notes and commentary by Rudolf Schottlaender and Eckhard Kessler, Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 1975), 70: “Falsis opinionibus circumventi veris sententiis liberandi sunt.” I cite the translation in Conrad H. Rawski, ed. and trans., *Petrarch’s “Remedies for Fortune Fair and Foul,”* 5 vols. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 1:10.

<sup>171</sup> The first printed edition of the work was issued in Venice in 1470 before the authentic texts of Seneca were published. See Francesca Niutta, “Seneca morale,” in *Seneca: Mostra bibliografica e iconografica*, 84.

<sup>172</sup> Petrarca, *De remediis*, 48–49 (Rawski, 1:1): “Cum res fortunasque hominum cogito incertosque et subitos rerum motus . . . quod ilud est bellum (quamque perpetuum) quod cum Fortuna gerimus, cuius nos poterat facere Virtus sola victores.”

<sup>173</sup> Petrarca, *De remediis*, 62 (Rawski, 1:7): “quasi duplicis morbi . . . non inefficax antidotum.”

<sup>174</sup> Petrarca, *De remediis*, 58 (Rawski, 1:6): “Namque qui damna, qui pauperium, qui exilium, qui carcerem, qui mortem et peiores morte graves morbos aequo animo tulerunt, multos vidi, qui divitias, qui honores, qui potentiam, nullum.”

<sup>175</sup> Petrarca, *De remediis*, 58 (Rawski, 1:6): “Ita saepenumero me spectante contra omnem adversae Fortunae violentiam invictos ludo facili prosperior stravit, humanique robur animi, quod minae non frangerant, inflexere blanditiae.”

<sup>176</sup> Petrarca, *De remediis*, 60 (Rawski, 1:6): “Ceterum Seneca ipse fortunae partem illam, quae sibi difficilior visa erat et est haud dubie prima fronte rigidior, brevi admodum sermone perstrinxerat. Is libellum passim in manibus vulgi est. Cui ego nil addere, nil detrudere meditor quod et magno ingenio conflatum opus nostram dedignatur limam et mihi meis rebus intento nec comere aliena nec carpere est animus.”

*tia* becomes immediately apparent. For Petrarch, these exercises in self-mastery are of deep political importance. For a start, the work is addressed and dedicated to a monarchical ruler, Azzo da Correggio, the *signore* of Parma, and it is presented as a *speculum*. Petrarch is quick to point out to his lordly reader that he scarcely needs Petrarch's advice, so expertly has he dealt with the problem of *Fortuna* in his own life; in a conceit with which we are now familiar, he states that the work simply serves to allow the ruler to "behold the profile of your mind as in a looking glass" in order to remind him to cultivate a state of mind that does not permit him to be distracted by the pursuits of the world.<sup>177</sup> Azzo is already as he should be. The point of the work is to reinforce the ruler's virtue, ensuring that he is armed with "short and precise statements, as if with a handy coat of mail without a chink, protecting you against all assaults and sudden attacks from this side or that . . . for we fight a twofold duel with *Fortuna*."<sup>178</sup> And Petrarch embellishes upon the details of that duel with all the Senecan resources at his disposal, talking of the need for mental invincibility when faced with the perils of being "strung up on the rack of *Fortuna*" or with the prospect of being tossed back and forth like balls, or like boats at sea.<sup>179</sup>

Azzo has endured all these viciously bruising encounters in his political life because he is "one to whom Nature has given a regal heart."<sup>180</sup> Here we can clearly discern the parts of the Senecan construction of the sovereign *persona* in terms of his specific *fortuna* and *natura*. For "Nature has provided . . . for us humans memory, intellect, and foresight—God-given and remarkable endowments of the mind," which serve as crucial resources in the fight we face. Most of us lack sufficient mental strength to deal with the reversals of *Fortuna*; through all the tribulations of his political career, Azzo, by way of complete contrast, has never faltered. Here, then, are the profound political implications to be drawn from peering into the princely mind and seeing it succeed in subjecting the passions: not only does it show his adherence to the Senecan belief that "a wise person conquers fortune by virtue," but in picturing his self-mastery, it also demonstrates the prince's claim to rule over others. For if we follow the Senecan logic in the way that Petrarch and his humanist followers suggest, we also have to concede that just such a wise man "always possesses an undiminished and stable liberty, being free and his own master and towering above all others. For who can possibly be above him who is above *Fortuna*?"<sup>181</sup>

And here, too, we begin to see the somewhat schizophrenic character of Seneca's providentialist account of *Fortuna* reemerging in Petrarch's Christian version of its role in human life. One reason why Azzo is said to have been able to demonstrate such invincibility in the face of his changing *fortuna* is that he has "entrusted" his "life and salvation to the treatment of the heavenly physician alone."<sup>182</sup> As Petrarch makes abundantly clear, there is no such thing, in fact, as *Fortuna*. She is, as both Seneca and Petrarch make clear when they direct their moral philosophy to a wide audience, merely the manifestation of a diseased soul caught in the tempestuous frenzy of

<sup>177</sup> Petrarcha, *De remediis*, 68 (Rawski, 1:9): "ut et in scriptis meis animi tui vultum velut in speculo contempleris."

<sup>178</sup> Petrarcha, *De remediis*, 26 (Rawski, 1:4): "ut his interim brevibus et praecisis sententiis quasi quibusdam expeditis atque continuis armis contra insultus omnemque repentinum impetum hinc illinc . . . duplex enim est nobis duellum cum Fortuna."

<sup>179</sup> Petrarcha, *De remediis*, 62–3 (Rawski, 1:7–8): "moltos in deliciis scimus." For the imagery of *pila* and *puppis*, see Petrarcha, *De remediis*, 50 (Rawski, 1:1–3).

<sup>180</sup> Petrarcha, *De remediis*, 64 (1, 7): "Tibi, cui cor regium Natura dederat."

<sup>181</sup> Seneca, *Epistulae morales* 71.30 (2:90): "Sapiens quidem vincit virtutem fortunam"; Seneca, *De brevitate vitae* 5.3 (*Moral Essays*, 2:300): "sapiens . . . numquam semiliber erit, integrae semper libertatis et solidae, solutus et sui iuris et altior ceteris. Quid enim supra eum potest esse, qui supra fortunam est?"

<sup>182</sup> Petrarcha, *De remediis*, 6 (Rawski, 1:8): "vitam ac salutem in solo medicis caelestis auxilio posuisti."

the passions that torment it, rendering it incapable of grasping the divine plan of the universe. As readers, we must remember Petrarch's guidance on this matter:

Nor should the word "*Fortuna*" bother you, which occurs not only in the title but throughout the work. . . . I believe it necessary, particularly for those less given to learning, that I use a simple word that is familiar to them, although I am not unaware of what others have said about it, most succinctly Jerome, where he writes: *nec fatum, nec fortuna*—there is no Fate and no Fortune. Thus, the common crowd will recognize their own way of speaking; and the learned, who are very scarce, will understand what I mean and will not be disturbed by my colloquial use.<sup>183</sup>

Thanks to Petrarch, not only the figure of *Fortuna* but also the Senecan lessons about how to defeat her come to pervade humanist princely ideology. The sovereign character of the "regal mind" comes to the fore in a series of letters that Petrarch addressed to various personnel attached to the royal court of Naples in the middle of the century. In a letter to Dionigi da San Sepolcro, an Augustinian friend and a close confidant of Robert of Anjou, he celebrates the moral qualities of Europe's most outstanding monarch:

Who in Italy—indeed, who in the whole of Europe—is more distinguished than Robert? For in him, I am often accustomed to reflect, what is so admirable is not so much his diadem as his morals, not so much his kingdom as his mind. For, I should say, he is truly a king who rules and restrains not only his subjects but also his own self, who exercises *imperium* over his passions—those rebels of the mind that would oppress him if he gave way. But just as there is certainly no victory more distinguished than the conquest of oneself, so there is no kingdom ruled with higher authority than the rule over oneself.<sup>184</sup>

Petrarch combines this emphasis on self-mastery as the *sine qua non* of sovereign rule with a deeply Senecan warning about the dangers of thinking that the entitlement to monarchical power emanates from anything other than the possession of virtue:

It is therefore an astonishing, albeit public, form of madness to call someone a king who is neither a king nor free nor often even a man. It is a great thing to be a king; it is a fact of no consequence at all to be merely called one. Kings are rarer than is commonly supposed by people; it is not, in fact, a common title at all. Scepters would use up fewer jewels and less ivory if only kings carried them. True kings carry inside themselves that which makes them

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<sup>183</sup> Petrarcha, *De remediis*, 212–14 (Rawski, 2:13): "Neque vero te moveat 'Fortunae' nomen non tantum in ipsis inscriptionibus, sed in opera repetitum! Saepe ex me, quid de Fortuna sentiam, audisti. Sed cum his maxime, qui doctrina minus fulti essent, haec necessaria praeviderem, noto illis et communi vocabulo usus sum, non inscius, quid de hac re late alii, brevissimeque Hieronymus, ubi ait 'Nec Fatum nec Fortuna, communis ergo acies suum hic loquendi morem recognescet.' Docti autem, qui perrari sunt, quid intendam, scient nec vulgari cognomine turbabuntur. Bipartiti sane operis passionum ac Fortunae de parte altera, quam visa sunt, diximus, de altera, quae dehinc visa fuerint dicemus."

<sup>184</sup> Francesco Petrarca, *Le familiari*, ed. Vittorio Rossi, 4 vols. (Florence: Sansoni, 1933–42), 1:162: "'Quis in Italia, imo vero quis in Europa clarior Roberto?' in quo sepe cogitans soleo non tam dyadema quam mores, neque tam regnum quam animum admirari. Illum ego vere regem dixerim, qui non subditos modo, sed se ipsum regit ac frenat; qui exercet in passiones suas imperium, quae sunt animo rebelles, illum, si cesserit, oppressure. Ut nulla est quidem clarior victoria quam se ipsum vincere, sic nullum regnum altius quam se ipsum regere." An English translation (which I use as the basis for my own) is in Petrarcha, *Letters on Familiar Matters*, trans. Aldo S. Bernardo, 3 vols. (New York: State University of New York Press, 1975–85).

venerable: they remain kings even when retinues have been laid aside and insignia thrown away; the cultivation of what is on the surface makes the rest of them horrible.<sup>185</sup>

For Petrarch as for Seneca, a king needs precisely those virtues that Seneca had laid down as the essential prerequisite for ensuring good rule—and good weather—within the interior kingdom of the mind:

How will a man over whom ambition reigns be a royal ruler to me? How will he be invincible if adversity lays him low? And how will he be serene if grief clouds him? How can he be magnanimous if fear of even the slightest thing frightens him out of his mind? And—let us pass over in silence the shining names of all the virtues—who will be able to say to me that he is free when he is weighed down by the manifold yoke of the various desires?<sup>186</sup>

The clouding effect of the passions is similarly visible in a letter to Giovanni Barrili, a soldier and magistrate from Capua, “to subject your mind to reason—or to put it another way—to subject you to yourself.”<sup>187</sup> In his case, the task of self-subjection is particularly directed toward the eradication of anger:

Any attempt at describing anger here would be superfluous, since its sad results are known even to the common man and fill entire volumes by philosophers, especially Plutarch and Seneca. I think you should be briefly reminded of what every learned person knows: where passions dwell, so too do hideous clouds and horrendous shadows of the soul—the eclipse of reason, I should properly say. And what I think applies to all these passions applies very closely indeed, I think, to anger. For there is nothing else that so disturbs peace and serenity, nothing that gives clearer testimony of a troubled man. . . . By contrast, when the mind is subjected to the rule of reason and is free from the passions, therein resides unshakable tranquillity, pleasant serenity, human happiness.<sup>188</sup>

All these Petrarchan preoccupations with the sovereign self are reiterated in a letter addressed to the Florentine businessman Niccolò Acciaiuoli, the Grand Seneschal of the Kingdom and the main power behind the throne after the accession of the new Angevin king, Louis of Taranto, in 1352. The letter is an “*institutio regia*,” an early contribution to the species of the princely genre that was to reach its most sophisticated form in the work of Erasmus.<sup>189</sup> It was immediately fa-

<sup>185</sup> Petrarca, *Le familiari*, 1:163: “Mira ergo, licet publica, dementia regem eum dicere, qui nec rex nec liber et sepe ne homo quidem sit. Magnum est regem esse, perexiguam regem dici; rariores sunt reges quam vulgus existimat; non est titulus iste vulgaris. Minus gemmarum atque eboris scepra consumerent, si soli reges illa portarent. Veri reges intra se gerunt quod eos venerabiles facit: semotis licet satellitibus et abiectis insignibus reges sunt; ceteros cultus exterior facit horribiles.”

<sup>186</sup> *Ibid.*, 162: “Quomodo ille michi rex erit, in quem regnat ambitio? quomodo invictus quem sternit adversitas? quomodo serenus quem meror obnubilat? quomodo magnanimus quem minimarum etiam rerum pavor exanimat? et ut fulgida virtutum nomina taceamus, quis michi liberum dicet eum qui cupidinum variarum iugo premitur multiplici?”

<sup>187</sup> *Ibid.*, 3:38 (*Fam.* 12.14): “peto autem, vir insignis, ut animum rationi sive, ut aliter idem dicam, te tibi subicias.”

<sup>188</sup> *Ibid.*, 39: “et supervacuum fuerit iram tibi velle describere, cuius tristes exitus vulgo etiam notos quidam philosophorum integris voluminibus sunt amplexi, precipue Plutarchus et Seneca. Illud tibi brevissime quod nemo doctus ignorat, inculcandum reor: ubi passiones habitant, nubilum esse teterrimum et horrendas anime tenebras, ac rationis, ut proprie dixerim, eclipsim; quod cum de omnibus tum de ira convenientissime dici arbitror. Nichil est enim quod eque tranquillitatem serenitatemque perturbet, nichil ubi tam clara testimonia lese mentis appareant.... Contra ubi mens rationis imperio subiecta et passionibus libera est, illic immota tranquillitas, illic iocunda serenitas, illic demum humana felicitas est.”

<sup>189</sup> This document is *Fam.* 12.2 (Petrarca, *Le familiari*, 3:5–17).

mous, its *fortuna* proving immense. In it, Petrarch calls upon the new king to place before his eyes the ideal example of his uncle, Robert of Anjou. For Robert was “wise, he was magnanimous, he was mild, he was the king of kings.”<sup>190</sup> So, Petrarch states, “let him form himself according to the rule of that man; let him contemplate himself in that flawless mirror.”<sup>191</sup> The imagery of the *institutio* remains strikingly Senecan throughout. The king is said to enjoy the title of “His Serenity” for as long as “no cloud of grief, no icy fear, no mist of earthly desires, no haughty air of exuberant cheeriness” descend upon him, for his mind must be “next to God and higher than human passions.”<sup>192</sup> He should never forget that “anger in a prince is the basest” of vices.<sup>193</sup> It leads, moreover, to cruelty, which is “all the more fatal in a man who has to hand so many instruments to cause harm.”<sup>194</sup>

Petrarch tells Acciaiuoli that the health “both of the *rex* and of the *respublica*” resides in the prince’s capacity to provide the requisite *cura*.<sup>195</sup> For this task, Petrarch affirms the indispensable quality of *magnanimitas*, which he defines, in straightforwardly Senecan terms, as “the peculiar virtue of kings, without which they are worthy neither of the kingdom nor of the royal name.”<sup>196</sup> The second essential virtue is said to be *humanitas*. Again, Petrarch rehearses the Senecan case, saying that “this is not merely a virtue of man but his very nature, and if it is lacking, it is more monstrous than corrupt; a king ought to have it all the more, inasmuch as he who holds first place among men must duly excel them.”<sup>197</sup> But a third virtue said to make the prince “extremely similar to God” is *misericordia*.<sup>198</sup> Petrarch rounds on “those philosophers who condemned pity” for “having erred deeply”; he almost certainly means Seneca.<sup>199</sup> Sharing in divine pity for man is for Petrarch a vital component of princely virtue. But this important change to the Senecan typology of princely virtues does not diminish the importance of *clementia*, which Petrarch continues to laud for its mitigating effects.<sup>200</sup>

Petrarch is particularly keen to underline the importance of the Senecan doctrine of princely servitude. The king must show that he merits his lofty position “no less on account of his virtue than on account of his blood.”<sup>201</sup> This duty is crucial because “a principate does not make a man but exposes him”; all the trappings of power that the prince inherits as a monarch do

<sup>190</sup> Petrarca, *Le familiari*, 3:16: “ille sapiens, ille magnanimus, ille mitis, ille rex regum erat.”

<sup>191</sup> *Ibid.*: “Illum intueatur; ad illius regulam se conformet; in illo se nitidissimo speculo contempletur.”

<sup>192</sup> *Ibid.*, 12: “Ad hec non temere neque fortuito serenissimi titulum sibi impositum arbitretur, sed ut in animum eius, Deo proximum et humanis passionibus altiorem, nulla meroris nebula, nullus flatus letitie gestientis, nulla pavoris glacies, nullus libidinum terrenarum fumus possit ascendere.”

<sup>193</sup> *Ibid.*: “Iram in principe turpissimam non ignoret.”

<sup>194</sup> *Ibid.*: “eo funestiorum quo nocendi plura suppeditant instrumenta.”

<sup>195</sup> *Ibid.*, 17: “hunc optimis et regis et reipublicae curis exerce.”

<sup>196</sup> *Ibid.*, 14: “magnanimitatem peculiarem regibus esse virtutem, sine qua nec regno nec regio nomine digni sunt.”

<sup>197</sup> *Ibid.*: “humanitatem si assit, non virtutem esse hominibus sed naturam, si desit, monstrum potius esse quam vitium; eo magis regi debitam quo magis regi debitam quo magis reliquos homines debet excellere is qui primum in hominibus locum tenet.”

<sup>198</sup> *Ibid.*: “affigatque animo regem misericordia simillimum Deo fieri.”

<sup>199</sup> *Ibid.*: “penitus errasse philosophos qui misericordiam damnaverunt.”

<sup>200</sup> See *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>201</sup> *Ibid.*, 8: “quibus gradibus . . . quibus artibus consistendum sit, neque tam deinceps enitendum ut ascendat altius quam ut ascensu se se appropet non indignum et hereditarium sceptrum non magis sanguini debitum quam virtuti.”

not “change his mind and his morals” but rather “put them on display.”<sup>202</sup> The moral of the story is clear: “the higher he is, the more clearly he is seen and the less possible it is for him to hide what he has done,” and “the more power he has, the less license he enjoys.”<sup>203</sup> The king is weighed down by “a burdensome honor and an honorable burden.”<sup>204</sup> This is because “while before he may have been unimpeded and free, he who becomes king thenceforth undertakes an honorable but laborious and solicitous servitude, so that under this servitude, there may be public liberty.”<sup>205</sup> He immediately continues the Senecan moral, saying that “he must henceforth live an exemplary life, for it is by the example of kings that kingdoms are formed, and an explanation for whatever error might be committed by the common crowd is usually demanded from the hands of those who preside over them.”<sup>206</sup>

Perhaps most importantly of all, Petrarch’s *institutio* incorporates all the lessons about *fortuna* provided in *De remediis utriusque fortunae*. On the one hand, Petrarch wants to describe the prince’s position as “this pinnacle of fortune”: “You have a king . . . whom you have led through many dangers, under fate’s compulsion, to the highest pinnacle of the human state. Show him by what steps he has been carried to this pinnacle of fortune, in what arts it is held to consist, and that thenceforth, rather than struggling to ascend higher, he must prove that he is worthy of his ascent.”<sup>207</sup> Compelled by fate and assisted by Acciaiuoli, the young king has played a rather passive role in ascending to the heights of power. Petrarch straightforwardly identifies the agency of fate with God, the *dominus* of virtue under whose leadership the better side had recently prospered on the battlefield. But on the other hand, Petrarch wants to depict *Fortuna* as an irrational, belligerent opponent who is merely biding her time for the real war that lies ahead. For now, warns Petrarch, “is in fact the time for you to summon up all your strength of mind, to arm yourself for vast undertakings . . . if you have any of the moral qualities of a Caesar.”<sup>208</sup> Petrarch counsels the prince’s guardian against complacency: “we saw you fight back so magnificently against adverse *Fortuna*; now we see you as the conqueror, but lo and behold, even when conquered, she often returns with a milder face on. . . . You conquered her as an adversary; she returns to battle as an ally.”<sup>209</sup> He adds that “the weapons have changed, but not the enemy”; Acciaiuoli now stands in need of “a new type of armor” to fight “in the open” the opponent whom he had de-

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<sup>202</sup> Ibid.: “Non facit virum sed detegit principatus, et honores non mutant mores atque animum sed ostendunt.”

<sup>203</sup> Ibid., 9: “Cogitet quo altior est eo se clarius videri eoque minus occultari posse que gesserit, et quo potentie plus est eo minus esse licentie.”

<sup>204</sup> Ibid., 14: “Denique honeroso honore et honorato se pressum honere fateatur.”

<sup>205</sup> Ibid.: “eumque qui rex fiat, etsi ante fuerit expeditus ac liber, ex illo tamen honestam suscipere sed laboriosam ac solicitam servitutem et sub qua publica sit libertas.”

<sup>206</sup> Ibid.: “vivendumque sibi deinceps exemplariter: exemplo enim regum regna componi et requiri solere de manibus presidentium quicquid vulgus erraverit.”

<sup>207</sup> Ibid., 6: “Habes regem . . . cum quo terra marique iactatus es, quem per multa precipitia cogente fato in summum status humani fastigium perduxisti. Ostende illi quibus gradibus in hunc fortune verticem sit evectus, quibus artibus consistendum sit, neque tam deinceps enitendum ut ascendat altius quam ut ascensu se se approbet non indignum.”

<sup>208</sup> Ibid.: “Nunc siquidem tempus est ut omnes animi tui vires colligas atque ingentibus negotiis accingaris . . . siquid Cesarei moris habes.”

<sup>209</sup> Ibid., 7: “Vidimus te adverse fortune magnificentissime reluctantem; iam cernimus te victorem; sed en totiens victa revertitur aspectu mitior et aurate cassidis, ut ita dixerim, fulgore suavior. Vicisti adversam; prospera redit in prelium.”

feated at close quarters.<sup>210</sup> If he succeeds, “the whole world may learn what sort and how much of a man you are when confronted with each of the two kinds of *Fortuna*.”<sup>211</sup>

Petrarch developed his account of princely rule in even greater detail in a letter of 1373 to Francesco da Carrara, the ruler of Padua. This document is well known; it is packed with Senecan doctrine; but we can quickly note a few of the outstandingly Senecan elements in it. Once again, the rhetorical structure of the work is borrowed from *De clementia*. In providing an account of the virtuous prince to Francesco, whose exceptional virtue is said to be already abundantly clear, his declared aim is

to show what the ruler of a country should be, so that by looking at this as though looking at yourself in the mirror, whenever you see yourself as the sort of person whom I am describing—as you will very often—you may experience joy and may become even more devoted and obedient in days to come to the dispenser of all virtues and goods, and so rise up with a huge effort through all the difficult barriers to that level where you cannot rise any higher. If you should ever feel that you are lacking anything, rub your face, so to speak, wipe clean your brow . . . see to it that you become more handsome, or at any rate at least more brilliant, than yourself.<sup>212</sup>

Petrarch’s persistent use of the device of the *speculum* in his monarchical writings provides him—as it had provided Seneca—with sufficient room to construct the *persona* of the prince according to his own moral specifications while simultaneously allowing him to praise his audience for having successfully embodied it. That *persona* is shown to be thoroughly conscientious. When Petrarch comes to the question of the prince’s accountability, he upholds his view that the *res publica* has been “committed” to “the care” of the monarch as its administrator, and not as its *dominus*, or owner.<sup>213</sup> When he says that the monarch “should do everything as someone who will be giving an account of everything,” he adds that “at any rate, he has an account to give to God, if not to men.”<sup>214</sup> In setting out this precept, he uses Suetonius to remind Francesco that Augustus rendered a set of accounts of his rule to the Senate; and he calls upon Cicero’s *De officiis* to support the idea that the willingness to “render an account” for one’s behavior, even when not formally obliged to do so, is practically the definition of moral duty.<sup>215</sup> But the point that Petrarch is making is a resolutely Senecan one, applicable to the government of a *res publica* that is

<sup>210</sup> Ibid.: “mutata sunt arma, non hostis, et tibi quoque novo armorum genere est opus . . . In arcto quidem egregie rem gessisti; qualem te in aperto exhibeas expectamus.”

<sup>211</sup> Ibid., 8: “Ad summa certamina ventum est ut universus orbis intelligat in utraque fortuna qualis quantusque vir fueris.”

<sup>212</sup> Francesco Petrarca, *Epistole*, ed. Ugo Dotti (Turin: UTET, 1978), 770: “et qualis esse debeat patrie rector, expediam, ut hoc velut in speculo tete intuens, ubi te talem videris, qualem dico, quod persepe facies, gaudeas, et virtutum bonorumque omnium largitori devotior fias atque in dies obsequentior, et ingenti nisu per difficultatum obices assurgas usque ad illum gradum, quo ire altius iam non possis; si quando autem deesse tibi aliquid senseris, faciem ipse tuam, ut si dicam, perfrices et manu operum fame frontem tergas teque ipso formosior vel certe nitidior fieri cures.” See also *ibid.*, 794: “ei cui reipublice cura commissa est summo opere providendum. . . Nichil igitur effundat, nil omnino faciat, nisi quod ad decus aut commodum pertineat civitatis, cui presidet; aut regni sic ad summam agat omnia ut administrator non ut dominus.”

<sup>213</sup> Ibid., 794: “ei cui reipublice cura commissa est summo opere providendum . . . Nichil igitur effundat, nil omnino faciat, nisi quod ad decus aut commodum pertineat civitatis, cui presidet; aut regni sic ad summam agat omnia ut administrator non ut dominus.”

<sup>214</sup> Ibid.: “Ita, inquam, agat omnia, ut rationem de omnibus redditurus, utique enim rationem reddere habet, etsi non hominibus, at Deo.”

<sup>215</sup> See *ibid.*, 794–96.

markedly absolutist: “what does it matter,” he says, “that someone is not to be held accountable to another person? For the soul is beholden to itself and its conscience, which, when unassuaged, makes life sad and anxious.”<sup>216</sup> The monarch must render an account of his rule to himself and to his god alone. Petrarch is insistent that if he is to maintain his authority, Francesco should advance no one in his government to the extent that “someone other than you is master.”<sup>217</sup>

Mastery demands self-mastery; and fortunately for Padua, Francesco’s government— notwithstanding his youth—has so far displayed none of the impetuous tendencies that Petrarch views as an immature form of rationality and a particularly acute symptom of vice in young men. He encourages Marco Genovese in the 1340s to pursue his political career with the more considered kind of judgment that comes with greater age than with the sort of hasty impetuosity characteristic of youth, since, as he puts it, “when the passions are quiet, the judgment secure, and the ferment of youthful pride restrained, through the more moderate and serene years of life, one proceeds in greater safety to salvation.”<sup>218</sup> And to Andrea Dandolo, the doge of Venice, he writes in 1351 that “among my numerable apprehensions . . . I fear none more than the intractable minds and opinions of young people, for youth is an age of ignorance, inexperienced with fortune’s fickleness and its power to overthrow empires once great. . . . A wildness is attributed to youth, prudence to old age.”<sup>219</sup> But Francesco has heroically shouldered the heavy burden of political rule, forgoing the possibility of “an unimpeded and tranquil youth” and displaying a preternatural capacity for sagacious government: “you have ruled with such maturity, with all the judgment of an older person.”<sup>220</sup> Like Seneca’s princely *persona*, he has not been moved by “juvenile impulse” but by the counsel of maturer years.<sup>221</sup> And he is as naturally prone to clemency as he is averse to cruelty; in the case of the latter vice, Petrarch states that there is no need to be anything more than very brief, since “not only are you free of it, but you so loathe it that for no one is it harder to struggle against his nature than it is for you to think, let alone to do, anything cruel . . . a vice alien to the nature of man and especially of a prince.”<sup>222</sup> Indeed, the full range of Francesco’s virtues will guarantee that he governs his subjects not as their *dominus* but as a true *pater patriae*.<sup>223</sup> Petrarch knows from Seneca’s mirror not only that

<sup>216</sup> Ibid., 796: “Quid autem refert alteri non teneri, cum sibi ipsi sueque conscientie animus teneatur, cui nisi satisfaciet, tristis et anxia vita sit?”

<sup>217</sup> Ibid., 810: “Hac parte unum hoc monere satis atque hortari vix sufficio, ne quem talium sic commisse tibi patrie preficias, ut alius dominus sit quam tu.”

<sup>218</sup> Petrarca, *Le familiari*, 1:130: “facies tandem re ipsa quod animo iam pridem facis, eodem adiutore qui inspirator fuit, et facies, ut spero, securius etate integra maturoque consilio, quam si id inconsulto repentinoque impetus iuveniliter attentasses. Sicut enim per terram latrunculis vacuum atque purgatam, per planum ac solidum callem sub tranquilla celi temperie tutum aviatori iter est, sic sedatis passionibus firmatoque proposito et primeve insolentie tumore compresso, per modestiores atque sereniores etatis annos tutissime pergatur ad salutem.”

<sup>219</sup> Ibid., 2:341–42: “Inter cuncta nimirum quibus angor aut terreor, nil magis quam intractabiles animos et consilia iuvenum pavescio; ignara etas est ac fortune volubilis inexperta et cuius impetus magna olim imperia corruerunt . . . adolescentie ferociam, senior prudentiam attribuunt.”

<sup>220</sup> Petrarca, *Epistole*, 822: “potens sine tot curis expeditam et tranquillam agere iuventam.” Ibid., 799: “ad regimen omnium conscendisti, commissamque tibi rem publicam, immaturos superante annos industria, tanta maturitate tamque senili consilio rexisti.”

<sup>221</sup> For the elimination of “juvenile impulse” in the Senecan prince, see *Clem.* 1.1.3.

<sup>222</sup> Petrarca, *Epistole*, 802: “Et tecum diutius quidem loqui de crudelitate non attinet, cuius tam non expers modo, sed hostis et, ut nulli difficilius sit contra naturam niti quam tibi crudele aliquid . . . vitium a natura hominis et presertim principis alienum.” Ibid., 776: “Ex quo utique magnum tibi et honestum gaudium nasci debet, qui te tuis ita carum sentias, quasi non civium dominus sed patrie pater sis.”

*pater patriae*.<sup>223</sup> Petrarch knows from Seneca's mirror not only that "Augustus was called Father of the Fatherland" but that "Nero was called Father of the Fatherland" as well; notwithstanding Seneca's efforts, the latter had proved to be enemy of both *pietas* and the *patria*.<sup>224</sup> The Senecan configuration of the body politic is then invoked to reinforce the character of the relation between ruler and ruled: "you must love your citizens as though they were limbs of your body, or parts of your soul: for the republic is one body and you are its head."<sup>225</sup> Indeed, he adds, you must love them "as much as you love yourself."<sup>226</sup>

While Petrarch's *speculum* to Francesco may have become the most cited of his writings on the prince in the historiography of Renaissance political thought, it was his *De remediis utriusque fortunae*, together with the Neapolitan *institutio regia*, that ensured that his Senecan account of the prince's war with *Fortuna* dominated the subsequent humanist literature. The former became "a best seller both in Latin and in vernacular translations."<sup>227</sup> But the latter similarly enjoyed a vast diffusion well beyond Naples. In Florence, it proved immensely popular: no fewer than sixty copies of the work are extant in various Tuscan manuscripts from the Renaissance period, a fact that lies behind recent claims about its formative impact on pre-Machiavellian princely thought in the city.<sup>228</sup> Perhaps the most striking evidence of the development of the Senecan elements in this story is observable in Poggio Bracciolini's dialogue *De miseria humanae conditionis*, dedicated to "the illustrious prince Sigismondo Pandolfo Malatesta" and composed in 1455 by the Florentine chancellor.<sup>229</sup> Poggio was a careful reader of Seneca, taking pains to acquire a decent copy of his works from a manuscript previously owned by Coluccio Salutati and Leonardo Bruni, and he had already put Senecan moral and political philosophy to ample use in his *De infelicitate principum* of 1439. As its most recent editor, Davide Canfora, points out, Seneca remained a consistent source of inspiration for Poggio (and for Leon Battista Alberti, too), and he is one of the most frequently cited classical authors in the text.<sup>230</sup> Poggio's declared theme is the unhappiness of princes, and its central insight is taken from Seneca: "As Seneca says,

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<sup>223</sup> Ibid., 776: "Ex quo utique magnum tibi et honestum gaudium nasci debet, qui te tuis ita carum sentias, quasi non civium dominus sed patrie pater sis."

<sup>224</sup> Ibid., 778: "Pater patrie dictus est Augustus Cesar, pater patrie dictus est Nero. Ille verus pater, iste vero hostis et patrie et pietatis."

<sup>225</sup> Ibid.: "Amandi tibi sunt igitur cives tui ut filii, imo, ut sic dixerim, tanquam corporis tui membra sive anime tue partes: unum enim corpus est res publica cuius tu caput es." Ibid.: "universamque rem publicam non quantum filium modo vel parentes, sed quantum temet ipsum amare debes."

<sup>226</sup> Ibid.: "universamque rem publicam non quantum filium modo vel parentes, sed quantum temet ipsum amare debes."

<sup>227</sup> Jill Krave, "Stoicism in the Renaissance from Petrarch to Justus Lipsius," *Grotiana*, n.s., 22/23 (2001/2002): 23 (and bibliography in n. 10).

<sup>228</sup> Francesca D'Alessandro, *Petrarca e i moderni da Machiavelli a Carducci* (Pisa: ETS, 2007), 15–54 (for the *institutio regia*'s Florentine *fortuna*, see 20); for its seminal contribution to the pre-Machiavellian literature, see also Stacey, *Roman Monarchy*, 137–44.

<sup>229</sup> Poggio Bracciolini, *De miseria humanae conditionis*, in *Opera Omnia*, ed. Riccardo Fubini, 4 vols. (Turin: Bottega d'Erasmus, 1964–69), 1:88: "ad illustrissimum principem Sigismundum Pandulphum Malatestam, de Miseria conditionis humanae, Liber 1."

<sup>230</sup> For Poggio's use of Seneca in the text, see the discussion in Poggio Bracciolini, *De infelicitate principum*, ed. Davide Canfora (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1998), lxi–lxvi; for Poggio, Alberti, and Seneca, see also Davide Canfora, *Prima di Machiavelli* (Rome: Laterza, 2005), 72–74.

*magna servitus est magna fortuna.*<sup>231</sup> In his later work, Poggio reprises the theme of the famous treatise by Innocent III of the same title. Poggio devotes pages of *De miseria humanae conditionis* to a relentless pursuit of the thoroughly Senecan story, bequeathed by Petrarch, about the havoc wreaked by *Fortuna* upon human affairs. He has no hesitation in reiterating this account: as he points out in his opening, an invaluable service to human society has always been performed by writers who “have devoted their efforts to restraining our excessive desires, and to reining back ambition and that truly vain passion for fortune’s gifts, which are so injurious to mankind.”<sup>232</sup> For Poggio, all the causes of our unhappiness—“all our anxieties, all life’s difficulties, all our spiritual ailments”—stem from our inordinate desires for external goods.<sup>233</sup> Poggio’s message is often described as an unremittingly bleak portrait of the human condition; but this is questionable. While he has clear reservations (as, indeed, Seneca himself did) about the possibilities of ever finding a *vir sapiens*, he is, in the first place, at least Stoic enough to see the value of contributing to a literature that tries to “root out these excessive desires of the mind and teach us to have as little as possible to do with fortune’s gifts,” since, as the sages inform us, they are rarely safe to enjoy.<sup>234</sup> For even “the highest positions—principalities, kingdoms, and empires—are nothing more than the blandishments of *Fortuna*,” the arbitrary outcome of her *imperium*, which she wields capriciously, “making a king of a slave and a slave of a king.”<sup>235</sup> Intervening as an interlocutor in the dialogue, Poggio certainly voices a profound despondency, pointing out to his audience that no one escapes the ravages of *Fortuna*, who frequently aims “her lightning bolts at the higher reaches and demolishes the topmost pinnacles,” where rulers reside.<sup>236</sup> As a consequence, we must be prepared for the fact that “*Fortuna* is adverse to the good and the brave above all: these are the ones who fall prey to her arbitrary attack [*pro arbitrio*], especially the virtuous.”<sup>237</sup> We are all “subject to her recklessness, more in thrall to her random violence than to reason.”<sup>238</sup> Turning to his principal authority on these matters, the author reminds us that “this is the position taken by that arbiter of morals Seneca, when he says that we have reached the hard and invincible realm of *Fortuna*, destined to suffer good and ill alike according to her whim

<sup>231</sup> Bracciolini, *De infelicitate principum*, 52: “In libro *De animi tranquillitate* Seneca: magna servitus est—inquit—magna fortuna.” Poggio misattributes it: the citation is from *De consolatione ad Polybium* 6.5.

<sup>232</sup> Bracciolini, *De miseria*, 86: “Inter varios scriptores, qui res diversas suis studiis complexi sunt, nulli mihi propius ad hominum utilitatem accessisse videntur, quam hi qui coercendas nimias animi cupiditates, tum etiam ad refrendandam ambitionem, supervacaneumque rerum fortuitarum appetitum perniciosam mortalibus mala suam operam contulerunt.” I cite the translation of Martin Davis in Jill Kraye, ed., *Cambridge Translations of Renaissance Philosophical Texts*, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 1:18.

<sup>233</sup> Bracciolini, *De miseria*, 86 (Kraye, 18): “Et certe omnes anxietates, omnes vitae molestiae, omnes animorum morbi contrahuntur a fortuna donis.”

<sup>234</sup> Bracciolini, *De miseria*, 87 (Kraye, 19): “Qua propter qui harum rerum nimias cupiditates ex mentibus hominum delere conantur, suadentque parum commercii cum fortunae donis habendum esse.”

<sup>235</sup> Ibid.: “Amplissimae dignitates, principatus, regna, imperia nihil aliud scimus esse quam blandimenta fortunae.” Bracciolini, *De miseria*, 89 (Kraye, 21): “non tam sunt haec admiranda . . . si quis fortunae in rebus humanis solitam licentiam atque imperium animadvertat . . . regem ex servo, servum ex rege facere.”

<sup>236</sup> Bracciolini, *De miseria*, 89 (Kraye, 21): “ut minime videatur mirandum illam tonare circa sublimiora, et summa fastigia demoliri.”

<sup>237</sup> Bracciolini, *De miseria*, 92 (Kraye, 23): “Hanc maxime bonis ac fortibus infestam viris, quos pro arbitrio oppugnet, virtuti praecipue inimica.”

<sup>238</sup> Ibid.: “illius temeritate nos subditos esse, viribusque eius magis obnoxium [*sic*] quam rationi.”

[*arbitrium*].”<sup>239</sup> It is true, Poggio concedes, that “Mother Nature has granted us reason as the one bulwark we have to enable us to stand up to the attack [*impetus*] of *Fortuna*”; but so massively swollen are the ranks of reason’s enemies by every kind of imaginable vice that “few men have yet appeared” with the power to overcome them.<sup>240</sup>

In some inspired casting of roles, Poggio thus comes to articulate a brilliantly unhinged point of view in the dialogue, offering a diagnosis of a virtually incurable human malady that is then disputed by the one figure in the dialogue who points to the remedies of reason in the face of this seemingly hopeless picture: Cosimo de’ Medici. It is not only his name that is of deep ideological significance in the text. The dialogue begins by telling us that the head of the Medici family is currently house-bound, afflicted by gout; it ends by giving the last word to Cosimo, who was already beginning to emerge in the 1450s as the unofficial arbiter of the Florentine Republic’s own fortunes, precisely because his alone consistently emerges as the voice of reason amid the encircling gloom: “It is true,” says Cosimo, “that life presents us with a great many difficulties and that humankind is very weak in the face of them. We are exposed to a great many buffets of fortune, and we are by nature fragile creatures.”<sup>241</sup> Having conceded this point, he goes on:

What is most important, however, is that God the creator of everything has granted us the supreme gift of reason, something to which we may turn as to an inviolate fortress. With the support of reason, and obedient to its counsel, we may set a measure on things and not allow our desires to outstrip the limits it has laid down. Those prescriptions will guide us to the perfect life and rescue us from every onset of misery. And if you do but harken to her, reason will indeed enable you to face *Fortuna* both good and bad with a firm and constant spirit. You will be able to meet everything that befalls you with equanimity, unmoved and self-possessed; you will have no need to fear onslaughts of grief. No fears will terrify you; you will experience a freedom of mind that will protect you from every assault of *Fortuna*.<sup>242</sup>

The real problem, as Cosimo goes on to underline, is that since so few of us cultivate virtue, “there is ample scope for *Fortuna*, as well as for vice, to throw our lives into turmoil with all sorts of ailments and passions.”<sup>243</sup> We have “neglected reason (and virtue is no more than right reason);” and as a consequence “we have become *Fortuna*’s slaves when we could be free.”<sup>244</sup> But as Poggio and his companion Matteo Palmieri point out, that is easier for Cosimo to say than for most other mortals: someone who lacked his advantages in life would think quite differently about the matter. The

<sup>239</sup> Ibid.: “Hinc morum praeceptor scribit Seneca, nos in fortunae regnum durum atque invictum pervenisse, illius arbitrio digna atque indigna passuros.”

<sup>240</sup> Ibid.: “Concessit nobis rerum parens natura, uni cum tantum rationis praesidium, quo firmiores contra fortunae impetum staremus . . . quarum [sc. perturbationum animi] vim pauci sunt adhuc reperti, qui ratione superarent.”

<sup>241</sup> Bracciolini, *De miseria*, 90 (Kraye, 22): “Fateor pluribus esse vitae nostrae molestias, et magnam esse humani generis imbecillitatem. Fateor pluribus fortunae ventis nos esse expositos, et naturam nostram fragilem esse.”

<sup>242</sup> Bracciolini, *De miseria*, 90–91 (Kraye, 22, slightly amended): “Id vero quod plurimi faciendum est, concessit nobis conditor omnium Deus, rationem rebus caeteris excellentiorem, ad quam tanquam munitam arcem confugeremus, cuius prasidio fulti, consilioque parentes rebus modum statueremus, nec progredi longius quam eius praescripta patiantur sineremus nostras cupiditates. Illius sane praeceptis ad beatam perducimur vitam, vendicamurque ab omni miseriarum tumultu. Id tibi certe ratio praestabit, si ei obtemperaveris, ut firmo constantique sis animo adversus utranque fortunam, ut omnes casus aequo animo feras, ut immobilis ac tui iuris nullos reformides miserarium tumultus, ad nullos metus expavescas, libertateque utaris animi, qua tectus sis ab omni fortunae bello.”

<sup>243</sup> Bracciolini, *De miseria*, 91 (Kraye, 22): “Sed quoniam communi stulticia a paucis virtus colitur, locus datus est tum fortunae, tum vitiis amplissimus, ad nos diversis aegritudinibus ac libidinibus perturbandos.”

<sup>244</sup> Ibid.: “servi fortunae facti, cum liberi esse possemus.”

endless reiterations of the more pessimistic view merely serve to underline how thoroughly exceptional Cosimo is: “the only difficulty we see you having to face is the gout. For the rest, God has heaped up for you in profusion all that men want.”<sup>245</sup> Cosimo is forced to concede: “I agree that *Fortuna*, that is the grace of God, has looked with favor on me personally and that I have been given, as you say, some moderate mental aptitudes.”<sup>246</sup> And moreover, history shows, says Cosimo—in an unguarded moment of fantastic self-aggrandizement—that plenty of men in Greece and Rome were held to have been “wise and just and to have lived virtuous lives which kept all misery at bay. . . . Your miserable condition of human existence applies . . . only to fools and cowards and the uneducated masses—those who have no resource of reason or prudence or virtue but are driven like cattle . . . by the sudden impulses of their appetites.”<sup>247</sup> The latter group are constitutionally incapable of resisting their impetuous desire to reach out for what *Fortuna* has to offer, but the effect, Cosimo warns, is disastrous: “by extending their hands toward the goods of *Fortuna*, they expose themselves and their families to the miseries of this life here below.”<sup>248</sup> Cosimo’s cautionary remark makes a clear moral point: if we are properly discerning in what constitutes the true good in this earthly realm (for there is, after all, another one to consider), we should not become involved with this changeable woman at all.

To appreciate how monarchical this presentation of Cosimo’s outstandingly Stoic moral credentials must have appeared, one need only glance at the relationship between the *princeps* and *Fortuna* depicted in the pages of *On the sayings and deeds of King Alfonso*, published in the very same year by Antonio Beccadelli (better known as Panormita), the Aragonese king’s royal secretary and chief purveyor of humanist culture at the royal court in Naples under the Alfonsine regime. The appendix of Panormita’s text is an account of Alfonso’s triumphal procession into the capital of his new kingdom in 1443, a year after the Aragonese conquest. His entry was carefully choreographed in a piece of street theater to depict to his new subjects the relationship between the new sovereign and the capricious goddess. The procession included personifications of the cardinal and theological virtues, bearing identifying symbols in their hands.<sup>249</sup> The figure of a fully armed Roman Caesar followed them in an ornate carriage, a globe of the world at his feet. According to one tradition, he hailed Alfonso as “Eccelsu re o Cesare novella,” urging the king to cultivate justice and to spurn *Fortuna*, and beseeching almighty God to keep the king in prosperity and “Florence in liberty.”<sup>250</sup> According to Panormita, the image of Caesar alerted Alfonso to the deceptions of the figure of Lady Fortune, at the head of the procession: “on no account should you trust in her: she is unstable and fickle. The world is changeable. Everything is

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<sup>245</sup> Ibid.: “Unicum podagrae incommodum in te conspicimus, reliqua Deus opulenter in te congegit, quae sunt homini praecipue exoptanda.”

<sup>246</sup> Bracciolini, *De miseria*, 94 (Kraye, 26): “Ego quamvis fatear fortunam, hoc est Dei indulgentiam in me satis propensam fuisse, animique dotes a te explicatas sciam in me essere mediocres.”

<sup>247</sup> Bracciolini, *De miseria*, 95 (Kraye, 26): “Iusti enim sapientesque sunt habiti, et cum virtute quae procul omnem a se miseriam repellit vixisse. Non igitur omnibus hominibus haec tua imperat misera conditio vitae, sed stultos tantum atque ignavum et imperitum comprehendit vulgus, quod nulla ratione, nulla prudentia, nulla virtute fultum more pecudum solo movetur sensu impetuque voluntario quodam atque repentino.”

<sup>248</sup> Ibid.: “Hi fortunae manus porrigentes, eique parentes, huius seculi miseriis se obiectant.”

<sup>249</sup> Alan Ryder, *Alfonso the Magnanimous, King of Aragon, Naples, and Sicily, 1396–1458* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 250.

<sup>250</sup> See Benedetto Croce, “I teatri di Napoli del secolo XV–XVIII,” *Archivio Storico per le Province Napoletane* 14 (1889): 563.

uncertain except virtue.”<sup>251</sup> As the royal retinue moved through the city, an altogether more princely set of moral qualities were mobilized by the Catalan contingent: Magnanimity, Constancy, Clemency, and Liberality each apostrophized the king from their float.<sup>252</sup> The most exorbitant claim was reserved for the speech given by the figure of *Clementia*, who stepped forward to greet her own mirror image in the person of the Aragonese king:

Then Clemency, her face more exhilarated than all the others, sought her reflection in the king as if in a mirror. “These other sisters of mine render you outstanding among men, certainly,” she said. “But I will make you the equal not of men but of the gods. For it is I who have showed you how to conquer yourself, how to spare the defeated, and how the defeated are to be reconciled to you.”<sup>253</sup>

The Senecan virtue thus announces the two dominant and intimately related themes of the ideology of Alfonso the Magnanimous: the king’s divine clemency and his aptitude for self-conquest. In a letter of 1443 congratulating the king on his triumph, Panormita articulated clearly and concisely the distinctive emphases of the language subsequently deployed in the humanist representation of Alfonso’s military victory and his rule over a conquered people:

Everyone deservedly rejoices because you are victorious, but I rejoice both because you are victorious and because you practice clemency and moderation in victory. Your *virtus* has rightly indeed obtained victory for you, but this much you have in common with many others. For there have always been, and there are today, those who have conquered, triumphed, ruled: they are innumerable and include among them those who are unjust and wholly unworthy; but those who have vanquished and have also spared the vanquished, never acting intemperately, cruelly, avariciously—there are extremely few examples of such men either in our own time or throughout the whole of history, and they have been regarded, and will continue to be regarded, as different. Your Cato used to say that the worst ruler was one who did not know how to rule over himself, and consequently, as I recall, that it seemed absurd that a man who could not conquer himself should be the conqueror of many others. The Macedonian is praised for being undefeated in feats of arms, but he is censured because he was vanquished by his own anger. Hannibal’s cruelty robbed him of much of his glory. In the same way, I would rather that victory wins praise for you than that *Fortuna* wins victory for you: for whatever happens in war is to be ascribed to *Fortuna*’s praise, but if in conquering you conduct yourself with benignity, pity, chastity, mildness, and firmness, you will defraud *Fortuna* of her praise . . . you will serve for the whole of posterity as an example of clemency and humaneness.<sup>254</sup>

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<sup>251</sup> Panormita, *Triumphus*, in *De dictis et factis Alphonsi regis Aragonum et Neapolis libri quatuor* (Rostock, 1589), 106–12: “Sequebatur hos rerum domina fortuna super tabulato pictis tapetibus instrato. . . ‘Sed fortunae quae tibi paulo ante crinem aureum porrigere videbatur, nequaquam confidas, fluxa et instabilis est. Ecce et mundus volubilis, et praeter virtutem omnia incerta.’” The *Triumphus* is included as an appendix in all three of the sixteenth-century printed editions of *De dictis et factis*.

<sup>252</sup> Panormita’s account of the procession of virtues is found at Panormita, *Triumphus*, 108–10.

<sup>253</sup> *Ibid.*, 110: “Clementia deinde vultum praeter caeteras exhilarata velut in rege quasi in speculo se ipsa intueretur. Reliquae, inquit, o rex hae sorores inter mortales te sane prestantissimum reddunt. Ego vero te non hominibus sed diis immortalibus facio aequalem. Ille quidem vincere ego te victis parcere eosdem tibi conciliari monstravi.”

<sup>254</sup> Panormita, *Epistolarum Gallicarum libri quattuor. Accedit etiam eiusdem Epistolarum Campanarum liber* (Naples, 1746), 313–14: “Quod vincis, merito omnes gaudent; ego vero, et quod vincis gaudeo, et quod victoria clementer, et moderate uteris, recte quidem virtus tibi victoriam peperit: verum hoc ipsum commune cum multis: nam et qui fuerunt, et qui sunt, vicerunt, triumphaverunt, imperarunt: hique innumerales, et interdum etiam iniusti, ac penitus indigni, qui vero, et vicerint, et victis pepercerint, nihil intemperanter, nihil avare, nihil crudeliter agentes, hi nostro,

Panormita here ostentatiously deploys the language of Cicero's panegyric of Julius Caesar in *Pro Marcello* to hail the clemency of his own prince, which indicates an important characteristic of the relation of the Renaissance princely ideology to the classical theory of monarchy: it acknowledged and indeed underlined the debt to the Caesarian speeches of Cicero that was so evident in Seneca's appropriation and elaboration of the concept of clemency and its relation to the self-conquering, self-legislating person of the monarchical ruler.<sup>255</sup> After the conquest of the *Regno* in 1442, the Alfonsine regime begins to articulate a profoundly Caesarian ideology of clemency to describe and defend the new political order that it imposes upon the politically and militarily ravaged kingdom. The systematic imposition of royal absolutism upon the kingdom by the Aragonese regime beginning with its arrival on the peninsula is well testified. Alfonso was routinely designated as *solutus a legibus*: the category of *potestas absoluta* is repeatedly invoked, as Alan Ryder's work has made clear, in the chancery registers of Alfonso's reign; and the language of parliamentary proceedings was as equally unabashed in its defense of royal autocracy.<sup>256</sup> But the humanist narrative that similarly begins to unfold at court is no less effective in pressing the same ideological claims on its own distinctive terms. The account given by Panormita of Alfonso's military conquest involves a graphic depiction of Alfonso in numerous acts of self-conquest that enable him to preside over a policy of clemency toward even the most intractable of his political opponents. In so doing, he is said to remain entirely untouched by the assaults of *Fortuna*: indeed, the claim that we see repeatedly advanced is that he has deprived her of any dominion over him at all.

One of the benefits of the recent scholarship of Ricardo Fubini and Davide Canfora has been to show how the consolidation of the Medici's grip on the Florentine Republic was accompanied not only by an increasing interest in Plato but also by a much closer reading of Seneca's work.<sup>257</sup> This intellectual trend is amply evident in the culture of the Florentine chancery in the second half of the quattrocento, where a deeply providentialist view of *Fortuna* continued to prevail well after the departure from government of Bracciolini, the death of Cosimo de' Medici and his acclamation as *pater patriae*. In some ways, this fact is not particularly remarkable. Alison Brown's pioneering work on Bartolomeo Scala, who presided over the chancery from 1465 onward, made it quite clear how and why, of all the ancient schools, "Stoicism must be regarded as the most important influence on Scala and the philosophy approximating most closely his own position" across the full range of his work.<sup>258</sup> If we turn to Scala's later writing in the 1490s, we find his fundamentally Stoic commitments once again on display. His *Apologia contra vituperatores civitatis Florentiae*, for example, reiterated a familiar interpretation of "the question of *For-*

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atque omni tempore perpauci, sed et dissimiles habiti sunt, et habebuntur. Cato tuus aiebat pessimum imperatorem esse, qui sibi ipsi imperare nescire, ideo, ut arbitrator, quoniam absurdam videretur eum plures vincere, qui se unum ipse non vinceret. Macedo ille magnus armis invictus laudatur, ira victus vituperatur. Annibalis gloriae multum crudelitas detrahit. Equidem malo tibi victoria laudem inveniatur, quam fortuna victoriam, quicquid in bello accidit, fortunae laus est: verum si vincendo, benigne, misericorditer, caste, mansuete, constanter te gesseris, fortunam sua laude fraudabis . . . erisque posteris omnibus clementiae, et humanitatis exemplum."

<sup>255</sup> See especially Cicero, *Pro Marcello* 4–13.

<sup>256</sup> Alan Ryder, *The Kingdom of Naples under Alfonso the Magnanimous: The Making of a Modern State* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), 31–32, 104, 136–68.

<sup>257</sup> Riccardo Fubini, "Leon Battista Alberti, Niccolò V e il tema della 'infelicità del principe,'" in *La vita e il mondo di Leon Battista Alberti*, 2 vols. (Florence: Olschki, 2008), 2:441; Riccardo Fubini, *Humanism and Secularisation from Petrarch to Valla*, trans. Martha King (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), 79–80, 97–108, 122–27. See also Canfora, *Prima di Machiavelli*, 71–79.

<sup>258</sup> Alison Brown, *Bartolomeo Scala, 1430–1497, Chancellor of Florence* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1979), 315.

*tuna*, who (as they say) enjoys overturning human affairs according to her whim.”<sup>259</sup> After rehearsing, and immediately rejecting, an Epicurean perspective on the matter, Scala concedes that events are nevertheless often difficult to decipher without recourse to some notion of *fortuna*. Sometimes, he admits, “prudence is wanting, and no human efforts figure out what to do when situations come before us in our deliberations where one must entrust the matter to *fortuna*—when, that is, we cannot rely on judgment [*arbitrio*] or reason but must await the course of nature and the outcome of unknown causes.”<sup>260</sup> He goes on:

Nature indeed is far from indeterminate, and the causes of those things of which she herself is the author are well known to her and are not truly a matter of *fortuna*. But we, not knowing the causes that make certain outcomes inevitable, assert that a great deal of what we see happen occurs by chance. For we do not understand why things happen. So we have given ourselves the name of *Fortuna* to say something that doubtless in itself is nothing. As the Satirist says, “we create a goddess and place her in heaven.” So what shall we say? What conclusion can we come to? *Fortuna* is no part of nature, who is also God, who governs everything according to his word of truth, not by accident or chance. Does it not follow that in human affairs there is no such thing as fortune? Let me not say that, since many misfortunes do occur which everyone wishes to avoid, and which, though you counter them with all your mental powers, still happen and afflict the spirit and make life very hard. And though chance has nothing to do with it and it is nature that shapes events, it should not be considered absurd that in many of our doings we ask for *Fortuna*’s help. . . . In these cases things happen that the mind cannot fully explain to itself, so it ascribes them to what we call *Fortuna*. . . . For to live lives entirely free from suffering is surely not in our power, but depends on *Fortuna*, if that word refers to those many things of which men do not know the causes . . . but there is no science of nature that suffices to ward off the blows of *Fortuna*, unless God shows his favor, so that one may see beyond mortal vision and avoid *Fortuna*’s assaults, even when at times she rages.<sup>261</sup>

There is very little in this vision that has changed since Petrarch’s development of the Senecan story about *Fortuna*. This relative lack of innovation is not very surprising. The overwhelming

<sup>259</sup> Bartolomeo Scala, “Defense against the Detractors of Florence,” in *Essays and Dialogues*, trans. Renée Neu Watkins (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008), 236 (translation on 237, slightly amended).

<sup>260</sup> *Ibid.*, 238 (239, slightly amended): “nec potest aliqua hominis industria in rebus quae veniunt in nostram deliberationem quid optimum factu sit dignoscere, ubi rem committere fortunae necesse est, id est, eventum expectare earum causarum quas ignoraveris et duci non arbitrio tuo et ratione, sed naturae necessitate.” It is not clear that *arbitrium* here is a reference to the power of “the will,” as Watkins’s translation has it. It makes better sense to think of it in this context as a reference to the power of one’s judgment.

<sup>261</sup> *Ibid.*, 238–40 (239–44, slightly amended): “Quae quidem ab omni profecto incertitudine longissime est, neque ipsa causas rerum quarum auctor est. Sed nos, ignoratis causis quas sequi eventa sua pernecessarium est, sorte cecidisse asserimus quae videmus tantum evenisse. Non etiam cur ita evenerint perspeximus. Nam Fortunae quidem nomen nobis ipsi confingimus, quae per se procul dubio nulla est. Sed ‘nos deam facimus caeloque locamus,’ ut Satyrus ait. Quid igitur dicemus? Quae sequemur sententiam? Natura certe fortunam non habet, apud quam nihil fit nisi a causa notissima naturae, quae et Deus est, qui in verbo veritatis suae omnia constituit, non temeritatis aut sortis. Ergo in rebus quae pertinent ad hominem fortuna non est? Non asseruerim id quidem, cum multa saepe accident incommoda hominibus, quae volunt evitare omnes, quibus etsi cunctis ingenii viribus occurreris, eveniunt tamen atque afflictae animi resque faciunt vivendi deteriores. Non igitur fortassis absurditer dicitur quod . . . imploremus Fortunam. . . . Quod in his modo rebus accidit quas explicare satis animus per se non potest, itaque sorti mandate quod eventurum est, atque hinc fortunae nomen est. . . . Nam quod omnino immunes malorum in vita simus, in potestate procul dubio nostra non est, sed Fortunae, si ea his tantummodo rebus praeest quarum ab hominibus nesciuntur causae . . . sed nullam tamen adeo essere exactam natura <e> disciplinam, nisi Deus aliter indulserit, ut videre supra hominem quisquam possit atque omnes declinare Fortunae impetus, si ipsa suo more quandoque desaeviat.”

majority of humanists remained basically wedded to some form of Christian providentialism, which is why they kept resolving the problems of contingency that they encountered in their understanding of events by recurring to this kind of framework. It enabled them to reassert that the concept of *fortuna* denoted no real force at work in the cosmos but that it remained a piece of useful vocabulary to deal with everyday life, attributing power to the goddess in the absence of a better grasp of the full story about what is happening to us. And in their eyes, the author of that story remains most assuredly a beneficent god. For as Scala himself puts it when discussing the recent reversals in his city's political fortunes after the rebellion of Pisa and Montepulciano against Florentine rule, "often, indeed, the better cause is tossed and buffeted but cannot be brought to suffer shipwreck, thanks to God, who governs and regulates human affairs."<sup>262</sup>

On the very eve of Machiavelli's composition of *Il principe*, one can glimpse this same mentality in the chancery in the turn that the philosophy of Marcello Virgilio Adriani took a year earlier, in November 1512, after the return of the Medici and Machiavelli's dismissal from his position in government. Drawing upon elements of Seneca's *De ira* during a professorial *praelusio*, the First Chancellor reprised the Stoic view that "everyone, from the slave to the king, should accept his fate and refrain from striving for higher things."<sup>263</sup> Adriani was not the only person close to Machiavelli counseling a Senecan perspective on events that month. In the course of their famous correspondence that month, his close confidant Francesco Vettori reminded him of the wisdom of Seneca's deterministic view of the universe, which the philosopher had expressed in the phrase "*sed fatis trahimur*" (but we are dragged along by the fates).<sup>264</sup> It is, once again, obviously not the case that a Senecan perspective on *Fortuna* was the only one available in the Renaissance. If one turns, for instance, to the work of Pontano, who is engaged in a very specific humanist project to incorporate Aristotelian philosophy into Neapolitan political and social theory, one finds a quite different kind of treatment of the subject in his treatise *De fortuna*.<sup>265</sup> But his kind of analysis is not principally in Machiavelli's sights in *Il principe*—and not just because Aristotle, obviously enough, had nothing to say about the relationship between the *princeps* and *Fortuna* (which is a profoundly Roman story). Victoria Kahn pointed out some time ago that one striking feature of Pontano's discussion of the concept is the absence of the single dominant figure—that of personification—that had been tirelessly deployed to talk about the virtuous prince's battle with *Fortuna* in princely political reflection from Petrarch onward.<sup>266</sup> And it is that personification which Machiavelli wants to recharacterize above all in *Il principe*. For Machiavelli, too, *fortuna* is a woman whose power over human agency needs to be resisted by the *virtuoso* prince. That view had been established in monarchical political theory by Seneca in *De clementia*.

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<sup>262</sup> *Ibid.*, 244 (245): "Saepe enim accidit ut fluctuet melior causa, sed ut faciat penitus naufragium accidere non potest, gubernatore atque administratore rerum humanarum Deo."

<sup>263</sup> Peter Godman, *From Poliziano to Machiavelli: Florentine Humanism in the High Renaissance* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998), 198.

<sup>264</sup> For this point, see John Najemy, *Between Friends* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), 220.

<sup>265</sup> For further discussion of these differences, see Fubini, *Humanism and Secularisation*, 129–33.

<sup>266</sup> Victoria Kahn, "Giovanni Pontano's Rhetoric of Prudence," *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 16, no. 1 (1983): 24: "there is no personification strictly speaking in the treatise."

## CONCLUSION

By the beginning of the sixteenth century, Renaissance humanist monarchical thought from Naples to the northern city-states of the Italian peninsula had become informed by Roman Stoicism of a specifically Senecan character.<sup>267</sup> The shape of this intellectual debt had been established and openly acknowledged in Petrarch's political and moral writings; it continued to expand in complex ways in successive humanist generations. It scarcely needs saying that it was hardly the only debt that humanist princely theory owed to classical philosophy; but it was a significant one, and since it has so far received relatively little attention, it is worth underlining, not least because it helps us better understand two outstanding features of early-modern political thought.

In the first place, we can see that we are in need of a much longer and more complex historical explanation of the Senecan commitments of early-modern neo-Stoicism than those currently available. The view that before the generation of Lipsius "the best known Stoic moral precepts had met with a mixed chorus of praise and blame [and] no one had thought to overcome this ambivalence by promoting Stoic ethics as an antidote to contemporary political ills" becomes harder to sustain: Italian Renaissance political and moral writing is simply packed with unequivocal endorsements of Senecan ethical doctrine, precisely in order to resolve pressing political problems.<sup>268</sup> One might still want to view this use of Seneca as somehow vulgar and ill-informed, philosophically speaking—a contaminated version of a set of doctrines that fell far short of a more thoroughgoing, authentic commitment to the Stoic school that could emerge only with the exacting philological scholarship of Lipsius behind it. Lipsius's rigor in the exposition of his Christian Stoicism was, after all, unparalleled. But unless we want to detach our intellectual history of Senecanism from our ideological history of the Renaissance, we need nevertheless to recognize the deeply creative exploitation of Seneca's ideas in the political literature about the prince from the trecento onward. The rather different thesis that holds that humanists in the sixteenth century were suddenly alerted to the relevance of Seneca and other writers of Imperial Rome to their lives because they now needed a new set of classical coordinates on which to reorient their political and moral thinking in increasingly absolutist monarchies presupposes both a misapprehension about the classical basis of the dominant political story that most humanists had been telling since Petrarch and a peculiarly shrunken conception of the political geography of the Italian Renaissance in which they were telling it.<sup>269</sup> Among other things, our intellectual and ideological histories of the Renaissance need to help explain the political complexion of early-modern Europe—largely monarchical and markedly absolutist. The involvement of Senecan political and moral theory in the legitimation of monarchical sovereign orders from the thirteenth century onward is one part of that explanation.

Furthermore, once we map out this more complicated narrative, we begin to glimpse the outlines of an ideological phenomenon that needs further consideration. The moral *persona* whom we meet in the pages of Lipsius's *On Constancy* is elaborated with a greater philosophical sophistication and with certainly more philological erudition than we see on display in the writings of the Italian Renaissance; but he is recognizably related to the sovereign self at the heart of Renaissance humanist princely theory. At a theoretical level, both are constructed from Senecan discussions of the conduct of the true *vir sapiens*; both are firmly wedded to the thought that to

<sup>267</sup> See Stacey, *Roman Monarchy*, 119–204.

<sup>268</sup> Krayer, "Stoicism in the Renaissance," 45.

<sup>269</sup> For the thesis of "old" and "new" humanism, see Richard Tuck, *Philosophy and Government, 1572–1951* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 5–119.

obey reason, as Lipsius sees it, gives one “sovereignty in all human affairs”; both are given to reflect upon their own interior life as if it were a realm in which reason bears the scepter of rule over the turbulent passions.<sup>270</sup> It is also worth pointing out that the ontological setting for Lipsius’s exploration of Stoicism, as it had been for Petrarch, is structured by a firmly Christian body-soul dualism. But notwithstanding their shared psychological characteristics, the Stoic subject and the Stoic prince are not simple variants of the same moral *persona*, the same kind of sovereign self, in different political positions; the contribution of Seneca’s political philosophy ensures that they are inflected in distinctively different moral ways, too. The sovereign *persona* of the early-modern subject can, if necessary, take refuge from the storms of political life if the head of his, her, or any other political body should fail to provide a sufficiently rational government in which to flourish; the subject can retreat to Senecan counsel on the art of self-government in the face of fluctuating fortunes. The sovereign prince is not so lucky. On the contrary, he is inescapably bound to his providentially allotted task of exercising sovereign power over a body that extends well beyond his own self; and he needs to be equipped with a set of exceptional capacities in order to do so. We need, in other words, to see the complexities of Seneca’s philosophical account of moral formation in order not to slip into the assumption that the subject of his moral and political theory is—or was historically understood to be—one and the same *persona*.

Second, and finally, we are now in a better position to identify and dissect with greater precision the terms of Machiavelli’s lacerating attack on the fundamentally providentialist account of the relationship between the prince and *Fortuna* that Machiavelli conducts in the course of *Il principe*. The basic logic of Machiavelli’s argument is clear: if the prince wants to achieve his goal of maintaining the state—and thereby *imperio* over his subjects—he will have to reject the prevalent view of what *virtus* means and what degree of power *Fortuna* has as an arbiter of human affairs.<sup>271</sup> I have begun to examine the details of this attack in detail elsewhere.<sup>272</sup> Here a few contextual observations can be added.

One can see exactly what kind of ideas about *Fortuna* preoccupied Machiavelli if we turn to his earliest writings on the subject. In his letter of 1506 to Giovanbattista Soderini, we find him using his so-called Ghiribizzi to recall the fickleness of *Fortuna* and her command over men.<sup>273</sup> In his *Tercets on Fortuna*, we find him working with an equally conventional imagery, opening the 193 verses of his poem with his declaration to “sing of the kingdom of *Fortuna* and of her chances favorable and adverse.”<sup>274</sup> We are immediately plunged into a very familiar realm presided over by a “shifting creature” and “a cruel goddess” who “sits on high above all,” enthroned in a palace from which she dispenses commands to her subjects.<sup>275</sup> It is deeply misleading to characterize this depiction as “a very medieval Fortune, whose power and unfathomable nature

<sup>270</sup> Justus Lipsius, *De Constantia* (Antwerp, 1599), 8 (bk. 1, chap. 5): “Ratio ad Deum adversa est . . . cui parere, imperare est: et subiici praesse rebus omnibus humanis.” Ibid., 3 (1,2): “Animus enim certe est, qui aegrotat . . . sceptrum abiecit princeps divinaque pars: et eo vilitatis lapsa est, ut sponte serviat suis servis.”

<sup>271</sup> Niccolò Machiavelli, *Il principe*, in *Tutte le opere*, ed. Mario Martelli (Florence: Sansoni, 1971), 258 (chap. 1): “Tutti li stati, tutti e’ dominii che hanno avuto et hanno imperio sopra li uomini, sono stati e sono o repubbliche o principati.”

<sup>272</sup> Stacey, *Roman Monarchy*, 270–93.

<sup>273</sup> Machiavelli, *Tutte le opere*, 1083: “la Fortuna varia et commanda ad li huomini, et tiègli sotto el giogo suo.”

<sup>274</sup> Ibid., 976: “canterò io del regno di Fortuna e de’ suo’ casi prosperi e avversi.”

<sup>275</sup> Ibid., 976–79: “volubil creatura . . . diva crudel . . . in alto sopra tutti segga, comandi e regni impetuosamente . . . sopra un palazzo d’ogni parte aperto regnar si vede.”

seem inextricably linked to her allegorical and gendered personification.<sup>276</sup> We are, on the contrary, in the presence of an impeccably classical and thoroughly Senecan portrait of *Fortuna*'s kingdom, which had been used by humanists for centuries before Machiavelli. Nor is it correct to suggest that, in the face of *Fortuna*'s "capricious tyranny," humanists delved into a tradition that "went back to the late Roman philosopher Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy*" to discover that the solution lay in "the exercise of virtue . . . understood as a form of mental firmness and an unyielding commitment to the good."<sup>277</sup> That part of the story was retrieved, too, from much earlier Roman classical sources, principally from Seneca.

In fact, the whole of Machiavelli's assault on the traditional account consists in seizing upon this established imagery and entirely reworking it to give the categories of *virtù* and *fortuna* radically new conceptual content. For Machiavelli, the idea that the effects of *Fortuna* can be overcome simply by constant mental strife is a form of delusion emanating from the conviction that they do not really exist: all the conventional lessons about self-rule make sense only in a providentialist world emptied of the contingencies that, as Machiavelli sees it, must be countered by a truly virtuous prince if he is to maintain his rule over others. In *Il principe*, Machiavelli relentlessly subverts all the images of the traditional account: the skies over the prince darken, the weather changes, and the general climate becomes markedly less clement. We find ourselves in an entirely unfamiliar setting. As chapter 25 makes abundantly clear in its rejection of the thought that God and *Fortuna* can somehow be aligned, the providential metaphysics has been dispatched, and only man and *Fortuna* remain:

I am not unaware that many have thought, and many still think, that the affairs of the world are so ruled by *Fortuna* and by God that men with their prudence have no power to control them. Rather, they think that we have no remedy at all; and therefore it could be concluded that it is useless to sweat much over things, but let them be governed by fate. This opinion has been more popular in our own times because of the great changes [*variazioni*] that have taken place and are still to be seen even now, which could hardly have been predicted. When I think about this, I am sometimes inclined, to some extent, to share this opinion. Nevertheless, in order that our ability to act freely [*libero arbitrio*] is not entirely extinguished, I judge [*iudico*] that it may be the truth that *Fortuna* is the arbiter [*arbitra*] of half of our actions, but that even she leaves the government of half of them—or thereabouts—to us.<sup>278</sup>

Sensitive interpreters of this passage realize the dangers of taking the concept of *arbitrio libero* here to mean "free will," and not just because Machiavelli uses no strong concept of "the will" anywhere in his writing (we might also recall, for reasons of further conceptual clarity, that the full title of Augustine's seminal work on this subject is *De libero arbitrio voluntatis*—*On the Free Choice of the*

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<sup>276</sup> Barbara Spackman, "Machiavelli and Gender," in *The Cambridge Companion to Machiavelli*, ed. John Najemy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 224.

<sup>277</sup> Mikael Hörnqvist, *Machiavelli and Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 234.

<sup>278</sup> Machiavelli, *Tutte le opere*, 295 (chap. 25): "E' non mi è incognito come molti hanno avuto et hanno opinione che le cose del mondo sieno in modo governate dalla fortuna e da Dio, che li uomini con la prudenzia loro non possono correggerle, anzi non vi abbino remedio alcuno; e per questo, potrebbono iudicare che non fussi da insudare molto nelle cose, ma lasciarsi governare alla sorte. Questa opinione è suta più creduta ne' nostri tempi, per la variazione grande delle cose che si sono viste e veggonsi ogni dì, fuora d'ogni umana coniettura. A che pensando io qualche volta, mi sono in qualche parte inclinato nella opinione loro. Nondimanco, perché el nostro libero arbitrio non sia spento, iudico potere essere vero che la fortuna sia arbitra della metà delle azioni nostre, ma che etiam lei ne lasci governare l'altra metà, o presso, a noi." I use the translation (slightly amended, for reasons discussed below) in Machiavelli, *The Prince*, ed. Russell Price and Quentin Skinner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 84–85.

*Will*). In the absence of any trace of faculty psychology in Machiavelli's thinking, it makes no sense even to ask whether Machiavelli thinks that choice proceeds from the will or from reason. A further problem in finding an adequate translation is that Machiavelli has barely finished telling his readers in chapter 23 that a prince should choose *uomini savi* to help him govern his state, and "solo a quelli dare libero arbitrio a parlargli la verità."<sup>279</sup> In this context, it also makes little sense to talk about the prince giving his ministers "free will" to tell him the truth. One solution is to follow Russell Price and Quentin Skinner in translating the term rather loosely to capture the sense of what is being said in each passage. Accordingly, they are prepared to render *arbitrio libero* in chapter 25 as simply "human freedom."<sup>280</sup> Machiavelli's advice for his prince on how to treat his ministers in the earlier chapter might similarly be rendered as an injunction "to give to them alone the freedom to speak truthfully to him." But, however we decide to translate the phrase, we need to see that the discussion of the exercise of one's *arbitrium* is involved in a language of government of the state in both cases; and what is conceptually at stake in each passage is the free use of that capacity in the process of government. Furthermore, the concept of *arbitrium* is closely associated with the judicial sphere in government. *Arbitri* make judgments about what to do in any given situation that have a decisive bearing upon the outcome. The problem with the traditional providentialist picture, as Machiavelli sees it in chapter 25, is that it deprives human arbiters of any such decisive power over events and instead hands over the government of human affairs to a divine agency: to God on a good day; and to a fictional goddess when our rational capacities fail to discern the benign logic at work in hideous reversals of luck but nevertheless persist in maintaining that, in fact, there must be such a logic. The imaginative construction of a tyrannical kingdom ruled by Mistress *Fortuna*, who, as we have seen, is said to wield her *arbitrium* capriciously over timorous slaves, is entirely parasitic upon the belief that there is a much more benevolent kingdom, in truth, to which we owe our allegiance by virtue of our reason. In either case, we are still subject to a monarchical arbiter of our destiny. This is the picture that Machiavelli shatters in asserting that we are, at least half the time, indeed subject to the truly arbitrary interventions of contingency in our life. But once we realize this fact, and begin to grapple with the very real variations in material circumstances that *Fortuna* brings—and has always brought, as any prudent reading of history will demonstrate—we can recuperate our ability to govern states decisively and with some hope of success for at least some of the time. Amid the wreckage of the traditional metaphysical account, Machiavelli begins to elaborate a new account of how to exercise *imperio* over *uomini* by means of the acquisition and maintenance of the state.

In this account, Stoic constancy becomes a hopelessly leaden form of rigidity, the height of imprudence, a total failure to respond to changes in time, occasion, circumstance—*variazioni*, to use Machiavelli's own word. In his reconstruction of the prince's *persona*, the cruelty, anger, and fear that had been systematically eclipsed from the picture flood back into the princely state as Machiavelli transvalues the pivotal concept of virtue: when Machiavelli rearms his prince, he also gives him back his affects. For Machiavelli's *virtuoso* prince is both young and *impetuoso*, the embodiment of so much that stands condemned as irrational, imprudent, and feminine in the conventional ideology. In that famous sentence of chapter 25, Machiavelli tells us: "it is better to be *impetuoso* than *rispettivo* because *Fortuna* is a woman, and if you want to control her, it is necessary to treat her roughly. . . . She is more inclined to men who are impetuous. . . . She is always well disposed toward young men, because they are less cautious and more aggressive and treat

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<sup>279</sup> Machiavelli, *Tutte le opere*, 293 (chap. 23).

<sup>280</sup> Machiavelli, *The Prince*, 85.

her more boldly.”<sup>281</sup> This is to subvert the lessons of centuries. The belief that a regime of conscientious self-reflection holds the key to the successful government of the principality is brushed entirely aside. Conversely, all those passional elements that had been hacked away from the princely personality and discarded as the very elements that deliver the sovereign into the grip of *Fortuna*—everything that virtue was conventionally said not to be—are now restored to the prince and held to be among his most manly, winning qualities. The new feminists are quite right to find a friend in Machiavelli.<sup>282</sup> He is assuredly possessed of a violent interpretation of man’s relationship with *Fortuna*, but at least he does her the courtesy of acknowledging her existence. As a consequence, his transvaluation of *virtù* involves its dramatic regendering, a reallocation of resources that confounds the prevalent binary scheme. It is also right to argue that the prince needs some of the qualities of *Fortuna* herself in order to match her. The insight with which we are presented is that the conventional construction of rationality, in its dismissal of changeable conduct as inconstant, feminine, and faulty, has actually rendered the prince a cumbersome, impotent, senile figure. Machiavelli rejuvenates him in what is, I think, an act of considerable liberation that still remains to be fully described. A

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<sup>281</sup> Machiavelli, *Il principe*, in *Tutte le opere*, 296 (chap. 25): “Concludo, adunque, che, variando la fortuna, e stando li uomini ne’ loro modi ostinati, sono felici mentre concordano insieme, e, come discordano, infelici. Io iudico bene questo, che sia meglio essere impetuoso che rispettivo; perché la fortuna è donna, et è necessario, volendola tenere sotto, batterla et urtarla. E si vede che la si lascia più vincere da questi, che da quelli che freddamente procedano. E però sempre, come donna, è amica de’ giovani, perché sono meno rispettivi, più feroci e con più audacia la comandano.”

<sup>282</sup> See the essays of Arlene Saxonhouse, Jane S. Jackett, and Andrea Nicki in Maria J. Falco, ed., *Feminist Interpretations of Niccolò Machiavelli* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2004), 93–116, 337–86.