1. The inspirational power of poetry (Ep. 108.9–10)

quanto magis hoc iudicas evenire cum a philosopho ista dicuntur, cum salutaribus praecptis versus inseruntur, efficacius eadem illa demissuri in animum inperitorum?

“How much more do you think this happens when those things are said by a philosopher, when verses are introduced with beneficial precepts, verses that will insert those same things into the mind of the inexperienced more effectively?”

2. Asking the correct questions (Ep. 88.7–8)

quomodo patriam amem, quomodo uxorem, quomodo patrem, quomodo ad haec tam honesta vel naufragus navigem.

“How I should love my country, how I should love my wife, how I should love my father, how, even if shipwrecked, I should sail towards these things that are so honorable.”

3. Apotropaic: poetry as warning
   • Tantalus

4. Parennetic: poetry as exhortation
   • Hercules

5. Seneca critiques poetry
   • It misrepresents the gods
   • It often promotes false values, such as wealth
   • It incites fear of a fictional underworld
   • But Seneca the tragedian seems to ignore these criticisms

Section 2: Stoic Themes and Ideas

1. Passion a reoccurring theme in both Seneca’s philosophy and poetry
   • Vengeance (Thyestes/Atreus, Medea, Clytemnestra)
   • Love (Medea, Phaedra)
   • Fear (Oedipus)

2. constanitia and self-address
   • De Providentia 2.10

   aggreedere, anime, diu meditatum opus, eripe te rebus humanis.

   “Oh mind, undertake the long-planned deed, snatch yourself away from human things.”

   • Oedipus 1024–5

   Quid, anime, torpes? socia cur scelerum dare poenas recusas?
“Why, oh mind, do you languish? Why do you, a sharer of crimes, refuse to suffer punishment?”

3. Acceptance of Fate
   • *(Oedipus* 980–4)

   Fatis agimur; credite fatis.  
   non sollicitae possunt curae  
   mutare rati stamina fusi.  
   quidquid patimur mortale genus,  
   quidquid facimus venit ex alto …

   “We are driven by the fates; yield to the fates. Anxious cares cannot change the threads of the fixed spindle. Whatever mortal kind suffers, whatever we do comes from on high.”

4. Kingship and power
   • *Thyestes* 204–7

   S. Fama te populi nihil adversa terret?  
   A. Maximum hoc regni bonum est, quod facta domini cogitur populus sui tam ferre quam laudare.

**Section 3: Philosophy and Storytelling**

1. Philosophical ideas and nuanced characters
2. *constantia* and self-address to justify and develop evil
   • “In *Agamemnon*, *Thyestes*, and *Medea*, the characters order themselves to plot and carry out criminal revenge” (Star 2006: 220).
   • *Thyestes* 192–6

   Age, anime, fac quod nulla posteritas probet, sed nulla taceat.  
   aliquod audendum est nefas atroc, cruentum, tale quod frater meus suum esse mallet—scelera non ulcisceris, nisi vincis.

3. Stoic notion of passion for metapoetic purposes
   • Medea and Atreus can stand in for the author
   • Oedipus shows the ineffectiveness of reason in contrast with chthonic prophecy
     o At the end of the play, Oedipus the cunning thinker and observer … in his search for truth, destroys the instrument and symbol of his reason. As he takes out his eyes, he transforms himself into another Tiresias … recognising the superior cognitive power of the seer’s blindness … a power deeply rooted in the chthonic realm of blood and passions” (Schiesaro 1997: 97).


