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THE SOCIAL, THERAPEUTIC AND DIDACTIC DIMENSIONS OF SHAME IN SENECA'S THINKING

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Abstract: This paper analyses the problem of shame in the thinking of Lucius Annaeus Seneca. The authors examine this problem primarily in two contexts. The first, social meaning, understands shame as an emotion that appears during a conflict between a person's "self" and social norms. Seneca mainly tackles this question concerning providing "benefits" (*beneficia*) in his *On Benefits* and eighty-first letter of *Moral Epistles*. The second therapeutic and didactic meaning utilises shame as an instrument to manage some illnesses of the mind (for example, anger). Moreover, to educate a "Stoic disciple" (*proficiens*), deliberate exposure to shame in public marks one of the important techniques to near the perfect ideal of "the wise man" (*sapiens*) and to prepare oneself for service in public office. Especially in *Moral Epistles*, we find a detailed description of this didactic approach and the limiting factors to using this technique.

Keywords: Seneca; Stoicism; shame; Stoic disciples (*proficiens*); wise men (*sapiens*); benefits (*beneficia*)

The concept of shame notably appears as early as in the thinking of the oldest ancient philosophers and remains important until later antiquity.[1] This paper considers the problem of shame in the philosophy of Lucius Annaeus Seneca. Initially, we shall consider the specifics of Stoic and Roman thought, which uses two Latin terms, *verecundia*, and *pudor*, to signify shame. These two terms appear totally sixty-eight times in Seneca's writings.[2] Based on a comparative analysis of these mentions, we can conclude that shame carries mainly two meanings in Seneca's thinking. The first, non-philosophical meaning, connects to an older tradition of shame's social function, which plays a crucial role as a regulating principle for interpersonal relationships in ancient society. The second, therapeutic and didactic meaning of shame is

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[1] See, e.g., Cepko 2023; Porubjak 2023; Wollner 2023.
[2] The term *verecundia* appears in Seneca's philosophical writings (with the exception of the author's tragedies and the work *Apocolocyntosis*) altogether twenty-nine times, while the term *pudor* is used thirty-nine times. A certain exception are Seneca's tragedies, where the term *pudor* appears exclusively. (Presented in reference to the corpus of Latin texts taken from The Packard Humanities Institute – PHI).

related to the previously mentioned social dimension but has a more philosophical aspect. Shame here denotes one of many therapeutic remedies used mainly in the upbringing and education of young Stoic adepts on the road to wisdom. We use textual evidence to describe the specific mechanism of shame and move from the general social understanding to the specific therapeutic and didactic use. Moreover, we shall showcase the reciprocal connection of these domains in Seneca's philosophical thinking.[3]

Shame in Stoicism and Roman Thinking

As was the case before with the Greek philosophical tradition, Stoicism also considers the problem of shame mainly through Greek terms: αἰδώς and αἰσχύνη.[4] The Stoics understood αἰδώς as a type of "good emotional state" (εὐπαθεία), also called "caution" (εὐλάβεια), which stood in opposition to "fear" (φόβος) and was defined as "rational avoidance" (οὖσαν εὔλογον ἔκκλισιν). For this reason, "the wise man" (σοφός) will practice caution but never fear (*SVF* III, 431).[5] Hence, αἰδώς marks a positive emotion, or put differently, a particular bodily signal, that prompts the wise man to prepare for a difficult situation. On the other hand, the Stoic definition of αἰσχύνη as "fear about a bad reputation" (φόβος ἀδοξίας) (*SVF* III, 408) carried exceedingly more negative implications. It mainly signified a particular form of fear a person faced within the social context.[6]

The Latin tradition also recognises two terms for shame, which are centrally connected to a reflection on relationships: *verecundia* and *pudor*. Robert A. Kaster identifies the first of the mentioned terms – *verecundia* – as an art of distinguishing one's place in every social transaction. Thanks to *verecundia*, we either establish or re-affirm a social tie between other people and us. It is a certain emotional disposition, a type of strategic and moderate fear of the possible reaction of surroundings to the acts of a person in a particular social position (Kaster 2005, 15–16).[7] For instance, Titus Livius recalls how during one battle against the Sabines, the infantry "felt ashamed" (*verecundiae erat*) seeing that the cavalry jumped down from their horses and started fighting as footmen and how the image of this embarrassment filled them with fighting vigour (Liv. III, 62–63). In other words, shame leads people to imagine how other members of society might treat them if they would not act according to expectations, in turn motivating better conduct. Further, in a political context, Cicero stresses that in the best city, the citizens do not dread "fear and penalties established by law" (*metu poenaque* [...], *quae est constituta legibus*) but by "shame" (*verecundia*) (Cic. *Rep.* V, 6). Therefore, *verecundia* supervises the appropriate behaviour of individual members of society, serving as an informal regulative principle for the state.

According to Kaster, the second Latin term, *pudor*,[8] has a similar meaning. However, we ought to associate it with negative emotions experienced as fear or discomfort. As opposed to *verecundia*, *pudor* is a more complex emotion that depends on a sense of personal "worthiness" (*dignitas*) and "value" (*existimatio*). The relation of the term *pudor* to these important expressions, which were the bedrock of Roman society, also explains why this emotion seldom

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[3] The only detailed study of shame in Seneca's thinking is by David Wray, who primarily focuses on the tragedy *Phaedra* (Wray 2015, 199–211).

[4] See Kamtekar 1998; Konstan 2003; Konstan 2006, 91–110.

[5] Cf. *SVF* III, 432. The English translations of ancient texts are always cited according to the critical translations recorded in the bibliography.

[6] Cf. *SVF* III, 407; 409.

[7] The Latin noun *verecundia* is derived from the verb *vereor* – "to show reverence or respect for; be in awe of; to regard as a source of danger, etc.; be afraid of, fear; to view (a possible occurrence) with apprehension, fear" (Glare 1968, keyword *uereor*, 2035–2036).

[8] The Latin noun *pudor* is derived from the verb *pudeo* – "to fill with shame; make ashamed" (Glare 1968, keyword *pudeo*, 1513).

appears in reference to slaves in Roman literature. We experience *pudor* when one perceives that one's "self" is discredited – when the value attributed to this "self" is not such as one wishes (Kaster 2005, 28–29).

Nevertheless, despite the distinction made above, it is not entirely clear whether the expression *verecundia* should correspond to the Greek term αἰδώς, while the word *pudor* should be understood in a more irrational sense as a counterpart of αἰσχύνη. Indeed, in Latin literature, the meaning of the two terms is often subject to confusion.[9] As an example, we can introduce two proposed definitions of shame. Cicero defines "shame" (*verecundia*), in *De re publica*, as "a sort of fear of criticism that is not undeserved" (*quasi quendam vituperationis non iniustae timorem*) (Cic. *Rep*. V, 6). Now, Aulus Gellius defines "shame" (*pudor*) as "the fear of just censure" (*timor iustae repherensionis*), directly identifying the Latin word *pudor* with the Greek term αἰσχύνη (Gel. XIX, 6, 3). So, while the definition of shame is content-wise almost identical, it is ascribed to a different Latin term (in the first instance *verecundia* and the second *pudor*).

Most likely, these confusing tendencies are also present in the works of Lucius Annaeus Seneca. For instance, in *De beneficiis*, Seneca first uses the term *pudor* and then the term *verecundia* to express a singular thought about controlling the feeling of shame (Sen. *Ben*. V, 20, 7). On a different occasion, Seneca even alternates between the two terms three times (*pudor – verecundia – pudor*) (Sen. *Ben*. VII, 28, 3). Indeed, similar examples are not rare, and we can find quite a few throughout the author's writings.[10] We can also note that Seneca does not prefer either of the mentioned terms within his philosophical works, which points in favour of their synonymic use.

The Social Dimension of Shame

If looking at all the mentions of *verecundia* and *pudor* in Seneca's works, we can say that the Stoic philosopher primarily thematises shame in the traditional social meaning – as an emotion that arises when our "self" conflicts with social norms. Seneca considers this issue mainly in reference to providing so-called "benefits" (*beneficia*). A benefit is: "a well-intentioned action that confers joy and in so doing derives joy, inclined towards and willingly prepared for doing what it does" (*Benevola actio tribuens gaudium capiensque tribuendo in id, quod facit, prona et sponte sua parata*) (Sen. *Ben*. I, 6, 1). However, this ethical definition denotes a complicated social praxis, integral to different levels of Roman society, which consisted of providing material or immaterial favours between the benefiter and the one who received the benefit (relationship of patron–client; emperor–court).[11] Such a relationship was based on following a particular set of more or less formal rules, including shame.

This issue shows up mainly in *On Benefits* and the eighty-first letter of *Moral Epistles*. These two texts mainly consider the disruption of the reciprocal relationship, where the benefit receiver becomes "an ungrateful person" (*ingratus*) by breaking the social obligation of somehow returning the favour to the benefiter. According to Seneca: "There is no worse hatred than that which springs from shame at the desecration of a benefit" (*Nullum est odium perniciosius quam e beneficii violati pudore*) (Sen. *Ep*. 81, 32).

Furthermore, Seneca insists that "a sense of shame" (*pudor*) is one of the few punishments which, along with "a convenient opportunity" (*occasio*) or "emulation" (*imitatio*), contribute to

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[9] For more on this issue see Kaster 2005, 61–65.
[10] See Sen. *Ep*. 11, 1–7; 83, 19.
[11] See Griffin 2003. Seneca recognizes three types of gains from providing benefits. The first type is "awareness" (*conscientia*), of having done a good deed. Second is "fame" (*fama*) and the third is "gratitude in return" (*vicis*) for provided benefit (Sen. *Ben*. II, 33, 3).

making *ingratus* properly return the favour to the provider of the benefit (Sen. *Ben*. I, 2, 4).[12] On the other side, the "respect for the man" (*verecundia*), along with "hope" (*spes*) and "importunity of his request" (*pertinacia instantis*), represent reasons that force "the good man" (*vir bonus*) to provide someone else a benefit (Sen. *Ep*. 81, 5). These mentions illustrate that both the debtor, who does not repay the provided benefit, and the provider, who does not provide benefits or is not adequately generous with their administering despite their social position, are subject to shame as a kind of social pressure. Or, as Seneca says, "someone who fails to return a benefit makes a bigger mistake, but someone who fails to give makes an earlier mistake" (*qui beneficium non reddit, magis peccat; qui non dat, citius*) (Sen. *Ben*. I, 1, 13).[13]

However, the given concept also encompasses additional aspects regarding the presented issues. For example, the giver should possess a sense of providing a benefit prior to any official request since a verbalised formulation of a request inspires "pain" (*tormentum*) (Sen. *Ben*. II, 1, 3). A person who receives a benefit must not be silent but speak publicly about the favour since one should not accept anything feels that evokes shame in the first place (Sen. *Ben*. II, 23, 1). Additionally, such public act makes others aware of the established reciprocal commitment. Now, the biggest shame for the one who provides a favour is to directly require some reciprocity from the receiver. The nature of this debt presupposes a repayment without coercion (Sen. *Ben*. I, 1, 3). Consequently, a situation arises where the receiver must speak publicly of their debt, while the giver must not. Hence shame, in connection to providing benefits, creates a whole web of delicate interpersonal relationships that require tactful manoeuvring from the concerned parties on the pretext of sanctions by the Roman society when ignored or broken.[14]

Apart from understanding shame in connection to benefits, Seneca is aware that this concept also plays a crucial function in the dynamic of religious practices. Benefiting in the religious context posits people as the receivers and gods as givers. For this reason, people ought to show gods adequate respect for the provided benefits. Thus, Seneca criticises poets who, in their works, speak disrespectfully of Jupiter, the highest Roman god. For example, describing him with wings, and horns, make him an adulterer and delinquent, who is cruel against gods or unjust towards humans, or they see him as a kidnapper and spoiler of people of free birth, father-killer, or usurper. All these stories are dangerous because, if believed, people will no longer feel "shame at doing wrong" (*pudor peccandi*) (Sen. *Beat*. 26, 6). In other words, similar degrading of the gods deprives human society of the natural fear of punishment, making the commitment of transgressions much easier.

These examples show that shame regulated social relationships on different levels, such as social or religious. Consequently, a loss of an overarching sense of shame is also considered a symptom of the deterioration of social order.[15] Seneca illustrates this phenomenon on the praxis of "divorce" (*divortium*) and "adultery" (*adulterium*). These practices, while rare, naturally inspired the judgment of others and made people greatly ashamed. However, when in Seneca's times, these practices became a normal part of life sense of shame could no longer

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[12] Cf. Sen. *Ben*. III, 1, 4; VII, 28, 3.

[13] For instance, Seneca mentions an example with Tiberius. When the former praetor Marius Nepos asked for help to get out of debt, Tiberius simply asked for the list of his creditors to settle the debts, instead of providing a benefit. Seneca insists, that in this case it was not "giving a gift" (*donare*), but rather "convening a meeting of creditors" (*creditores convocare*) (Sen. *Ben*. II, 7, 2).

[14] We can see this on the example with the emperor Augustus. Seneca contemplates, that one may express gratitude to powerful people by telling them the truth, which should resonate from their circle of friends. In this way, the emperor Augustus could have avoided sending, for the reasons of infertility, his own daughter to exile while announcing it publicly. This act unintentionally brought "shame" (*verecundia*), to Augustus. However, it did not have to happen if the emperor had good friends who would have provided some advice for a given benefit (Sen. *Ben*. VI, 32, 1–4).

[15] See Sen. *Ep*. 90, 20; *Ira* II, 9, 1; *Ben*. VII, 9, 5; 27, 1.

serve as something that restrained people from committing the mentioned digressions (Sen. *Ben*. III, 16, 1–4). Seneca then ascribes a regulative significance to shame. The absence of this feeling, on an individual level, signalises the breaching of social ties, which could even lead to moral dissolution on a social level.

Therapeutic and Didactic Dimension of Shame

Apart from the social dimension, we can find Seneca using the terms *verecundia* and *pudor* with therapeutic and didactic meanings. In a therapeutic sense, shame was used as a remedy[16] to manage different disturbances of the soul. Even though the author never describes a concrete mechanism of this medical remedy, it clearly relates to the already-mentioned social significance. A person could avoid negative emotions by learning to anticipate the shame that some public emotional outburst would inspire in others or perhaps even in oneself. Fear of "shame" (*pudor*) or "regret" (*paenitentia*) marks a unique human defence mechanism, which allows us to resist negative emotions or pleasures, thus, differentiating us from animals (Sen. *Ep*. 74, 15).[17] Seneca offers a more detailed consideration of shame as a particular instrument that protects us from acting in a vice when discussing "anger" (*ira*) and "drunkenness" (*ebrietas*).

To heal violent anger, the author suggests pausing for a moment until a person calms down, and the natural remedies to manage anger, "fear" (*metus*) and "shame" (*pudor*), manifest (Sen. *Ira* III, 39, 4). If one succumbs to anger, the healing power of shame resides in the consequent feeling of shame, probing avoidance of a similar situation in the future. The feeling of shame simply signals that we committed something wrong. Hence, it has an exclusively positive role. However, as Seneca says elsewhere, "drunkenness" (*ebrietas*) can suppress this good signal. Therefore, the negative aspect of alcohol use is mainly the effect of overturning "shame" (*pudor*), which can tame destructive passions. Because of this, Seneca says: "For more men abstain from forbidden actions because they are ashamed of sinning than because their inclinations are good" (*Plures enim pudore peccandi quam bona voluntate prohibitis abstinent*) (Sen. *Ep*. 83, 19; cf. *Ira* III, 37, 1).

The presence of anger and similar negative emotions hindered the attainment of moral progress. Therefore, for "Stoic disciples" (*proficientes*),[18] conscious exposure to shame in public characterised an important technique serving to near the perfect ideal of "the wise men" (*sapiens*). We could even say that shame became part of the curriculum of educating young men in Stoic philosophy. For instance, a younger follower of Seneca, Gaius Musonius Rufus (approximately 30 – 101/102 AD), informs us that a philosopher should not motivate acclaim, cheering, or ovations in students. Students "must necessarily shudder and feel secret shame and repentance or rejoice or wonder" (*perhorrescat necesse est et pudeat tacitus et paeniteat et gaudeat et admiretur*). These feelings, accompanied by silence, signify those philosophical thoughts penetrated the depths of the listener's soul (Gel. V, 1, 1–6). Seneca thinks similarly about the use of shame in the educational process. As a better "teacher" (*praeceptor*), Seneca considers someone who, instead of torturing the students when they do not remember or cannot

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[16] Which therapeutic instrument is best to use depends on the character of each person. For some its best to use "self-respect" / "shame" (*verecundia / pudor*), while with others "sojourn abroad" (*peregrinatio*), "pain" (*dolor*), "poverty" (*egestas*), "sword" (*ferrum*), "entreaty" (*preces*), "fear" (*terrendo*), "reproof" (*obiurgatio*), "confession of guilt" (*confessio*), "procrastination" (*mora*) (Sen. *Ira* I, 16, 4; III, 1, 2).

[17] An exception is Pliny the Elder, who ascribes "sense of shame" (*pudor*) to elephants (Plin. *Nat*. VIII, 5, 12). In addition, Seneca in his tragedy *Phaedra* insists, that animals do not commit incest because they have "instinctive chastity" (*inscius pudor*) (Sen. *Phaed*. 914) (Kaster 1997, 9).

[18] See Sen. *Ep*. 20, 1; 33, 7; 71, 35; 72, 9; 79, 14; 95, 36; 100, 11; 108, 6; 124, 1.

read something, "to correct, and so to teach" (*emendare ac docere*) uses "admonition and a sense of shame" (*monitionibus et verecundia*) (Sen. *Cl*. I, 16, 3).[19]

The Stoic teacher behaves as "a guardian" (*custos*) or "an attendant" (*paedagogus*), whom younger students should respect and see as a model for their behaviour (Sen. *Ep*. 11, 9). In fact, Seneca thought that contact with virtuous people benefits those close to them (Sen. *Ira* III, 8, 2).[20] Just as medical blends can heal just by their smell prior to physical contact, the virtues shed usefulness just by their presence. In a sense, the carrier of virtue can infect others with positive vigour (Sen. *Tranq*. IV, 7).[21] Such interaction was either indirect, where the figures of Stoic sages or old examples of virtuous lives (such as Cato the Younger and Gaius Laelius Sapiens in the Roman framework)[22] served as models of ideal conduct. Alternatively, it was direct (active teacher-student learning), where the teacher guides the disciples, pointing out acts that should be avoided and followed if their character cannot make such differentiations without guidance (Sen. *Ep*. 94, 50–51).

Moral Epistles provides various instances where the author personally poses as a teacher guiding young men, with occasional references to shame as one of the educational techniques. Perhaps the most crucial illustration of this process is the eleventh letter. Here Seneca appears as a teacher of an unnamed "man of ability" (*bonae indolis*), who was making "progress" (*profectus*) in learning Stoic philosophy. Seneca puts the student to trial on an unspecified occasion and probes him to speak on some topic without preparation publicly.[23] Quite naturally, it motivates a feeling of "modesty" (*verecundia*) accompanied by a physiological sign, "the blush" (*rubor*), that manifests by "quick and mobile blood, that rushes to the face at once" (*incitati et mobilis et cito in os prodeuntis*).[24] With redness also comes "perspiration" (*sudor*), "tremble in the knees" (*tremunt genua*) or "teeth chatter" (*dentes colliduntur*), "tongues falter" (*lingua titubat*), "lips quiver" (*labra concurrunt*). These inborn or "natural weaknesses of the body" (*naturalia corporis vitia*) can be "toned down" (*ponuntur*) with philosophical training but never wholly "overcome" (*vincitur*). That shame cannot be restrained or voluntarily produced is evident from "actors in the theatre" (*artifices scaenici*). Actors imitate shame (by hanging their heads, lowering their voices, and keeping their eyes fixed and rooted upon the ground) but cannot produce redness with conscious effort. Now for some people, such as Sulla, flush indicated the intensity of anger – a negative sign, which signalised that we are better off avoiding such a person. As Christina Richardson-Hay notes, Seneca considered dictator Sulla

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[19] In the letter nineteen of *Moral Epistles* where Seneca explains the differences between techniques, "scolding" (*denuntiatio*), "counsel" (*admonitio*) and "rebuke" (*castigatio*) are also mentioned. And precisely rebuke and counsel relates to motivating "shame" (*pudor*) (Sen. *Ep*. 94, 36–44). The process of upbringing and education trough shame is not merely part of philosophical education but also one of the techniques used in raising children in families. Parents often probe their children, from a young age, to bear things that will bring them profit in the future. For example, they straighten their limbs if they are somehow deformed or make them study (see Sen. *Ben*. VI, 24, 1–2).

[20] The opposite of this principle also applies. Seneca insists, that like physical illnesses, where infection spreads through contact with the infected, also moral deficiencies spread in the field of mental processes. For instance, in *De ira* Seneca says: "The drunkard lures his boon companions into love of wine; shameless company corrupts event he strong man and, perchance, the hero; avarice transfers its poisons to its neighbours" (*Ebriosus convictores in amorem meri traxit, impudicorum coetus fortem quoque et, si liceat, virum emolliit, avaritia in proximos virus suum transtulit*) (Sen. *Ira* III, 8, 2).

[21] Such carrier of virtue, who dwells in our mists, often does not need to speak a word, for virtuous citizen helps "by his expression, by his gesture, by his silent stubbornness, and by his very walk" (*voltu, nutu, obstinatione tacita incessuque ipso*) (Sen. *Tranq*. IV, 6).

[22] Cato the Younger and Gaius Laelius Sapiens often appear together in Seneca as typical Roman moral *exempla* (see Sen. *Ep*. 7, 6; 25, 6; 104, 21).

[23] Seneca often conceptualizes the problem of shame in the context of oratory (see Sen. *Ep*. 40, 13–14; 114, 16).

[24] Cf. Sen. *Ben*. II, 1, 3.

an *exemplum crudelitatis*,[25] and Sulla's bloody face symbolised his bloody crimes (Richardson-Hay 2006, 341). For others (Pompey, Papirius Fabianus),[26] a flushed face marked a sensitive character that manifested this way with public presentation, considered rather an ornament of the soul. Seneca understands the mentioned display of shame by the youth from the beginning of the letter in a similar light. Not as a sign of "mental weakness" (*infirmitate mentis*), but of "the novelty of a situation; an inexperienced person is not necessarily confused, but is usually affected because he slips into this habit by the natural tendency of the body" (*a novitate rei, quae inexercitatos, etiamsi non concutit, movet naturali in hoc facilitate corporis pronos*). Therefore, it is even desirable for shame to persist even after abolishing all faults and finally becoming "the wise man" (*sapiens*) (Sen. *Ep*. 11, 1–7).

The ability to feel shame mainly indicates that a Stoic student possesses a predisposition for guidance and still has hope for a change in thinking. Indeed, age is an essential factor. While Seneca in the given text explicitly says that also "seasoned men" (*veterani*) and "aged men" (*senes*) experience shame, it evidently belongs to good traits found especially "in youth" (*iuvenes*) (Sen. *Ep*. 11, 3). For example, in letter twenty-five of *Moral Epistles*, the author mentions some issues with educating his forty-year-old friend. Here "age" (*aetas*) and the difficulty of transforming older human character poses the main obstacle since only "young minds" (*tenera*) (Sen. *Ep*. 25, 1–2) can be moulded. Another limiting factor of this technique, which indirectly relates to age, appears when "the errors of life are a positive source of pleasure" (*vitae peccata delectant*) instead of "shame" (*pudor*). For, a helmsman surely laments the sinking of his ship, a doctor patient's death, and an attorney a lost proceeding. However, by force of "habit" (*consuetudo*), people are rather pleased by fraud and stealing unless consequences halt the enjoyment (Sen. *Ep*. 97, 10–11).[27] Seneca uses this metaphor to explain that, at some point, philosophical remedies are simply powerless to heal hardened faults strengthened through long-term perpetuation. As the author insists, in the letter ninety-four of *Moral Epistles*: "Not even the power of universal philosophy, though it summon all its strength for the purpose, will remove from the soul what is now a stubborn and chronic disease" (*Ne ipsa quidem universae philosophiae vis, licet totas in hoc vires suas advocet, duram iam et veterem animis extrahet pestem*) (Sen. *Ep*. 94, 24). Therefore, this therapeutic technique is more fitting for a young Stoic adept.

Moreover, as shame indicates the commitment of wrongdoing, its presence concurrently with good acts signalises, to proficient and seasoned Stoics, an inconsistency in their philosophical principles. In letter eighty-seven of *Moral Epistles*, Seneca quite aptly describes that he recognised his inadequate philosophical preparation by being ashamed. The author talks about an experience connected to an unspecified trip conducted modestly with a friend Maximus.[28] During the travel, Seneca had only a few slaves, a shortage of clothing, simple food, and a carriage. Despite the philosophical conviction that modesty and poverty must be elevated,[29] Seneca could not handle being seen travelling in such an undignified manner. Whenever he met a more distinguished carriage, he started to "blush" (*erubesco*) and feel "embarrassment" (*verecundia*). For Seneca, that was evidence of not firmly adopting what he publicly approved of and considered correct. He would not dare to display modesty publicly because he cared about what other travellers might think (Sen. *Ep*. 87, 1–5). In this case, his social status (rich

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[25] See *Ira* I, 20, 4; II, 2, 3; II, 34, 3; III, 18, 1; *Ben*. V, 16, 3; *Prov*. 3, 8.

[26] Papirius Fabianus was Seneca's teacher and follower of Quintus Sextius. Seneca held him very dearly (see Sen. *Ep*. 40, 12; 52, 11; 100, 9; *Brev. Vit*. 10, 1; 13, 9).

[27] Cf. Sen. *Ep*. 112, 1–4.

[28] Caesonius Maximus was Seneca's friend and a Roman consul. Maximus was exiled from Italy by emperor Nero in the year 66 AD.

[29] See Rosivach 1995.

man ought to travel extravagantly) conflicted with his moral conviction (Stoic philosopher should not dwell on luxury).

Presented examples demonstrate the link between the philosophical and social significance of shame in thinking of Lucius Annaeus Seneca. Educating future philosophers occurs purposefully before the eyes of the public, as exposure to shame prepares the Stoic adept for service in public office. Indeed, the Stoics consider public involvement as the best way to become beneficial for humanity.[30] The public philosophical training, conducted under the supervision of a teacher, serves as a "know-how," helping the Stoic adept to successful political life. According to Seneca, we should not just resign from public activity and retire to solitary studies. The mind cannot slumber; it is naturally active and inclined to move.[31] For this reason, the mind needs the outside stimuli obtained from involvement in public life (Sen. *Tranq*. II, 9; II, 11). Particularly the Stoic student might experience problems with loneliness. If such a "thoughtless person" (*imprudens*) is left alone, bad thoughts might emerge that were, from "fear" (*metus*) or "shame" (*pudor*), long hidden (Sen. *Ep*. 10, 2). Hence, learning without a tutor is, in such a case, possible only after gaining self-respect through education (Sen. *Ep*. 25, 5–6). To be truly useful for oneself and others, the Stoic adept must learn, also utilising shame, how to bear the weight of public responsibilities. On the other hand, in *De tranquillitate animi*, Seneca talks about negative character traits that disqualify people from such work.[32] Here the author mentions, along being "stubborn" (*contumacia*), "anger" (*ira*), excessive inclination to "pleasantry" (*urbanitas*) or disproportionate tendency for "freedom of speech" (*libertas*), precisely also "modesty" (*verecundia*). Such people are better at engaging in peaceful studies rather than active occupations (Sen. *Tranq*. VI, 2–4). Therefore, in this context, an undue inborn sense of modesty poses an obstacle in performing public activities.[33] So Seneca is not radical in the question of public involvement, apparently also seeing limits of this principle, probably relating to the philosophy of Panaetius.[34]

We can conclude that Seneca problematises the concept of shame on two basic levels. Shame had primarily a social function used mainly in the praxis of providing so-called benefits. But Seneca also mentions shame concerning religious practices and moral evaluation of Roman society. In this sense, the presence or absence of shame signalised whether people are keeping or transgressing social norms. The philosophical dimension of shame, utilised in the therapeutic and philosophical domain, arose particularly from this social significance. Seneca considers this aspect mainly in the context of educating and upbringing young Stoic adepts. The feeling of shame signifies a suitable disposition to Stoic education, which consequently finds practical use in public affairs. It appears that the presence of shame is, for Seneca, one of the main factors for the healthy development of an individual and a society, with these parts being reciprocally dependent. By using shame, we can bring up future generations of good politicians who subsequently use shame to regulate social relationships. Likewise, only a society with some sense of shame can effectively form education for such a young generation. Therefore, in his

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[30] Seneca, in *De tranquillitate animi*, says: "For, whenever a man has the set purpose to make himself useful to his countrymen and all mortals, he both gets practice and does service at the same time when he has placed himself in the very midst of active duties, serving to the best of his ability the interests both of the public and of the individual" (*Nam cum utilem se efficere civibus mortalibusque propositum habeat, simul et exercetur et proficit, qui in mediis se officiis posuit communia privataque pro facultate administrans*) (Sen. *Tranq*. III, 1; cf. *Tranq*. I, 10; *Ep*. 22, 7).

[31] The Stoics understood the soul as derived from *pneuma*, an active principle of *kosmos* (see *SVF* II, 441; 796).

[32] See De Lacy 1977.

[33] Perhaps for this reason Seneca deems, in *De ira*, specifically "bashfulness" (*verecundia*) along with "pity" (*misericordia*) and "love" (*amor*) as "the milder faults" (*vitia leniora*) (Sen. *Ira* II, 15, 3).

[34] For the debate regarding the influence of Panaetius on Seneca's thinking see (Sellars 2014, 102–106; 109).

philosophical work, Seneca connected these two aspects to one coherent system and sketched the mechanisms and limits of this therapeutic and didactic remedy.

Acknowledgements

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