

[1]

Cum a Bais deberem Neapolim repetere, facile credidi tempestatem esse, ne iterum navem experirer; et tantum luti tota via fuit ut possim videri nihilominus navigasse. Totum athletarum fatum mihi illo die perpetiendum fuit: a ceromate nos haphe excepit in crypta Neapolitana.

When it was time that I ought to return to Naples from Baiae, I easily believed there to be a storm in order that I might not attempt the ship again; but the road was so muddy the whole way that it seemed nonetheless that a sea voyage may have been possible. The whole of fate athletes had to be endured by me that day: from the anointing we received a sand sprinkle in the underground passage in Naples.

[2]

Nihil illo carcere longius, nihil illis facibus obscurius, quae nobis praestant non ut per tenebras videamus, sed ut ipsas. Ceterum etiam si locus haberet lucem, pulvis auferret, in aperto quoque res gravis et molesta: quid illic, ubi in se volutatur et, cum sine ullo spiramento sit inclusus, in ipsos a quibus excitatus est recidit? Duo incommoda inter se contraria simul pertulimus: eadem via, eodem die et luto et pulvere laboravimus.

Nothing could be longer than that prison, nothing darker than those torches which stood there not that we might see through the shadows but to see the shadows themselves. Even if the rest of that place had had light, how we were misled by dust, which even in the open is a serious and difficult matter: there it wallows and when shut in without any breathing space comes back to those who disturbed it? Two inconveniences at the same time from opposite directions we suffered through: the same way, the same day we laboured through both mud and dust.

[3]

Aliquid tamen mihi illa obscuritas quod cogitare dedit: sensi quendam ictum animi et sine metu mutationem quam insolitae rei novitas simul ac foeditas fecerat. Non de me nunc tecum loquor, qui multum ab homine tolerabili, nedum a perfecto absum, sed de illo in quem fortuna ius perdidit: huius quoque ferietur animus, mutabitur color.

However, the shadows gave me something to ponder: I felt a certain thrill to the spirit and a change without fear due to the unaccustomedness and novelty having made a new thing foul. Now I do not speak to you about myself, who is far from being tolerably a man far less perfect, but about he over whom fortune has lost justice: of whose spirit will be struck, and he will change colour.

[4]

Quaedam enim, mi Lucili, nulla effugere virtus potest; admonet illam natura mortalitatis suae. Itaque et vultum adducet ad tristitia et inhorrescet ad subita et caligabit, si vastam altitudinem in crepidine eius constitutus despexerit: non est hoc timor, sed naturalis affectio inexpugnabilis rationi.

For from such, my Lucili, no bravery is able to flow: being reminded of its mortal nature. And so his face is both pulled tight to sadness and suddenly shudders and will even mist over [with dizziness], if standing on a high empty precipice he will look down: this is not fear, but I think natural affection for safety.

[5] Itaque fortes quidam et paratissimi fundere suum sanguinem alienum videre non possunt; quidam ad vulneris novi, quidam ad veteris et purulenti tractationem inspectionemque succidunt ac linquntur animo; alii gladium facilius recipiunt quam vident.

Thus some men with bravery and great preparedness allow their own blood to flow but cannot see another; or with a new wound, or the purulent pulling and inspecting of an old one they collapse, their spirit abandoned; others easily receive the sword when they see it coming

[6]

Sensi ergo, ut dicebam, quandam non quidem perturbationem, sed mutationem: rursus ad primum conspectum redditae lucis alacritas rediit incogitata et iniussa. Illud deinde mecum loqui coepi, quam inepte quaedam magis aut minus timeremus, cum omnium idem finis esset. Quid enim interest utrum supra aliquem vigilarium ruat an mons? nihil invenies. Erunt tamen qui hanc ruinam magis timeant, quamvis utraque mortifera aequae sit; adeo non effectum, sed efficientiam timor spectat.

Therefore I feel, as I was saying, something not disconcerting but a change: at the first observation of the joy of light returning without knowing or being commanded. Then I begin to say to myself how it is more or less absurd that we are fearful of certain things when all the same ends are reached. For which is the difference between being crushed by a watchtower or by a mountain? I think nothing. There will however be those who fear the latter ruin more though both would be equally fatal; so much it is that fear looks not to effect but to cause.

[7]

Nunc me putas de Stoicis dicere, qui existimant animam hominis magno pondere extriti permanere non posse et statim spargi, quia non fuerit illi exitus liber? Ego vero non facio: qui hoc dicunt videntur mihi errare.

Now you think I am talking about the Stoics who reckon it is not possible to weigh up, to wear down, to penetrate the spirit of man and suddenly scatter it, what will it not be to him having lost freedom? I truly do not do that: those who do seem to me to err.

[8]

Quemadmodum flamma non potest opprimi - nam circa id diffugit quo urgetur -, quemadmodum aer verberare atque ictu non laeditur, ne scinditur quidem, sed circa id cui cessit refunditur, sic animus, qui ex tenuissimo constat, deprehendi non potest nec intra corpus effligi, sed beneficio subtilitatis suae per ipsa quibus premitur erumpit. Quomodo fulmini, etiam cum latissime percussit ac fulsit, per exiguum foramen est reditus, sic animo, qui adhuc tenuior est igne, per omne corpus fuga est.

Just as the flame is not able to be crushed - for it disperses around what presses upon it - just as the air cannot be harmed by blows and lashes, not even by tearing, but idles about the flowing back, thus the spirit, which exists from the most tenuous, is not able to be caught nor destroyed in the body but by benefit of its delicacy bursts through that which presses it. Just as lightning even with a broad strike illuminates through a meagre opening on returning, thus spirit, which is more tenuous than fire, escapes through the whole body.

[9]

Itaque de illo quaerendum est, an possit immortalis esse. Hoc quidem certum habe: si superstes est corpori, opteri illum nullo genere posse, [propter quod non perit] quoniam nulla immortalitas cum exceptione est, nec quicquam noxium aeterno est. Vale.

Thus it must be asked whether it is possible for it to be immortal. To which, be sure of this: if it outlives the body, it is in no way possible to crush it out, [since it has not perished]; immortality is without exception nor is anything harmful to the eternal. Farewell.