

## THE WILL IN SENECA THE YOUNGER

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THERE ARE FEW WORDS in the philosophical lexicon so slippery as 'will'. In an attempt to track a history of the idea of will, the most we have going for us is a widely agreed-upon lexical correspondence. In modern European languages, so far as I know, we can at least pick out counterparts: will, *volonté*, *volontà*, Wille. Push it back a bit further and you arguably add the Latin *voluntas*. But as almost everyone agrees, you cannot push this lexical correspondence back to ancient Greek, where neither βούλησις nor προαίρεσις, neither διάνοια nor any other term quite does the job.<sup>1</sup>

What lies behind these lexical correspondences, though, is considerably less clear. Just what is meant by 'will' and whether it exists—or can helpfully be talked about, if one's sympathies run towards instrumentalism in such matters—are all controversial questions. What A. Kenny rightly calls "a view familiar in modern philosophical tradition" holds that

the will is a phenomenon of introspective consciousness. Volition is a mental event which precedes and causes certain human actions: its presence or absence makes the difference between voluntary actions [*sic*]. The freedom of the will is to be located in the indeterminacy of these internal volitions. The occurrence of volitions, and their freedom from causal control, is a matter of intimate experience.<sup>2</sup>

Kenny rejects this conception of the will, following (as he says) Wittgenstein and Ryle. But he has captured it well. One might bring many different theories of the will to some sort of order by suggesting that they are best understood as various accounts of will in this sense. For the sake of simplicity, I would like to adopt Kenny's description of a traditional sense of

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1. This view is shared by all the authorities on Seneca cited in this paper. Some might argue that προαίρεσις in Epictetus does capture the idea of will. I cannot deal with Epictetus in the course of this paper, though of course his work postdates Seneca anyway. (Recent work dealing in part with Epictetus and the will includes two excellent discussions: A. Alberti, "Il volontario e la scelta in Aspasio," in *Aspasius: The Earliest Extant Commentary on Aristotle's Ethics*, ed. A. Alberti and R. W. Sharples, Peripatoi Band 17 [Berlin and New York, 1999], 107–41 and S. Bobzien, "The Inadvertent Conception and Late Birth of the Free-Will Problem," *Phronesis* 43 [1998]: 133–75.)

2. A. Kenny, *Aristotle's Theory of the Will* (New Haven, 1979), vii.

the term 'will' as a reference point, adding only one further observation. Although Kenny does not emphasize it (since he dismisses the idea *a fortiori*), it is almost universally assumed by proponents of traditional will that its occurrent volitions are rooted in a faculty of the will, a distinct part of the soul or mind, a set of dispositions devoted particularly to the generation of volitions in the sense just given.

The critique of the traditional sense of will in Anglophone philosophy since World War II is so familiar as to need little description. In its place there has grown up a body of theory not designed as a competing account of traditional will, but as a displacement of it, an explicit attempt to account for the "springs of human action" (to adopt the familiar phrase used by Kenny and advertised in the title of A. Mele's recent book)<sup>3</sup> without it. Kenny, in *Aristotle's Theory of the Will*, identifies G. E. M. Anscombe's *Intention*, his own imperatival theory of will, and the work of D. Davidson (at least up to the time of *Essays on Actions and Events*) as central to this project.<sup>4</sup> He then sets out to track the same style of theory in Aristotle. This project aims to account for the phenomena purportedly accounted for by traditional will and rests on the principle that "a satisfactory account of the will must relate human action to ability, desire, and belief."<sup>5</sup> A related and almost equally influential approach to the problem of the will in this tradition is that of H. Frankfurt.<sup>6</sup> For Frankfurt, will in its simplest form is our "effective desire" and is a psychological event that many subhuman animals can share.

In this project, the lexical item 'will' is not supposed to stand for any single mental item. It points instead to a set of *explananda* and it indexes a theory defined in part by the denial that there is any such single mental item as traditional will that coherently accounts for them. The word 'will' as used in this project is an instrumental summary reference to a more complex set of *explanantia*. I will label it 'summary will'. Traditional will and summary will involve very different ontological claims. The corresponding philosophical psychologies cannot be reconciled by terminological stipulations. Since my aim is to consider Seneca the Younger's contribution to the topic of will, it will be important to distinguish clearly between traditional will and summary will. This has yet to be done in considerations of the philosophy of Seneca.

The significance of Seneca for the history of the will has long been appreciated, at least in broad outline. Indeed, since traditional will is generally agreed to be absent in Aristotle,<sup>7</sup> yet is apparently present in Augustine and

3. Ibid., viii; A. Mele, *The Springs of Action* (New York and Oxford, 1992).

4. Kenny, *Aristotle's Theory*, viii; G. E. M. Anscombe, *Intention*, 2d ed. (Ithaca, 1969); A. Kenny, *Action, Emotion, and Will* (London, 1963) and *Will, Freedom, and Power* (London, 1975); D. Davidson, *Essays, Actions, and Events* (Oxford, 1980).

5. Kenny, *Aristotle's Theory*, viii.

6. H. Frankfurt, "Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person," *JPh* 68 (1971): 5–20, reprinted as chap. 2 of *The Importance of What We Care About* (Cambridge, 1988). Frankfurt's approach developed and became more subtle in his later work, and he has decisively influenced several more recent philosophers to work in the same vein (I think in particular of M. Bratman's recent works *Intention, Plans, and Practical Reason* [Cambridge, MA, 1987] and *Faces of Intention: Selected Essays on Intention and Agency* [Cambridge, MA, 1999]).

7. See Kenny, *Aristotle's Theory*, vii.

in medieval philosophy,<sup>8</sup> and since our lexical correspondence only extends to Latin and not to ancient Greek, interest naturally enough turns to ancient philosophers working in Latin, of whom Seneca is one of the best, best preserved, and most influential.<sup>9</sup>

The importance of *voluntas* in Seneca's work, especially in the *Letters* and later treatises such as the *On Favors*, has long been noted. Pohlenz attempted to explain the sharp emergence of *voluntas* as a result of Seneca's Roman experience and language, regarding Augustine's use of the term as the natural culmination of this development.<sup>10</sup> *Voluntas* was Seneca's attempt to render the Greek διάνοια, Pohlenz thought, and the term shifted markedly in its meaning as a result of the connotations and social practices associated with the term in Seneca's time and place;<sup>11</sup> a voluntarist theory resulted. Rist attempts to mitigate this reading, claiming that "when Seneca talks about willing and the will, what he is really concerned with is our moral character,"<sup>12</sup> and he denies a radical discontinuity with earlier Stoic psychology. He urges a view of Senecan *voluntas* that is as innocent of traditional will as was Aristotle's theory or even Chrysippus'.<sup>13</sup>

Yet even Rist concedes that Seneca's use of the term is not fully accounted for in such terms (227), and his reaction against Pohlenz has not been influential. The voluntaristic interpretation of Seneca (which sees in him the roots of traditional will) survives in I. Hadot's book *Seneca und die griechisch-römische Tradition der Seelenleitung*, though her discussion is brief.<sup>14</sup> And this view permeates A.-J. Voelke's *L'Idée de volonté dans le Stoïcisme*,<sup>15</sup> being especially prominent in his chapter on Seneca. P. Grimal's treatment of Seneca<sup>16</sup> typically leaves it difficult to tell just what kind of will he attributes to Seneca, though an attentive reading certainly points to the traditional rather than to the summary sense.

In the early 1980s P. Donini's much closer description of Seneca highlights the role of *voluntas* in the letters and the *On Favors*;<sup>17</sup> Donini's frank

8. The role of Augustine is reasserted by C. Kahn in "Discovering the Will: From Aristotle to Augustine," chap. 9 of *The Question of Eclecticism*, ed. J. M. Dillon and A. A. Long (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London, 1988), 237–38, modifying the claims of both Gauthier and Dihle.

9. T. H. Irwin has recently advanced a significantly different view of the will in Aristotle in "Who Discovered the Will?" in *Ethics, Philosophical Perspectives*, vol. 6 (Atascadero, 1992), 453–73. He argues that Aquinas was right to detect a conception of the will in Aristotle's ethics, one that does much of the same work as his own notion of *voluntas* does. But Irwin does not show that Aristotle goes beyond what I have called a summary conception of the will; rather, he argues that the largely intellectualist theory of Aristotle represents a theory of the will, but not a voluntarist theory. Perhaps so, though his analysis of βούλησις seems open to doubt, and is certainly not one that would naturally occur to anyone not beginning from a reading of Aquinas' discussion of Aristotle. It may be that Aquinas' own explicit theory of the will is intellectualist in character; that goes beyond my competence and present interests. In this paper my concern is only with the development of the distinctively nonintellectualist theory more conventionally associated with the terms *voluntas* and 'will'.

10. M. Pohlenz, "Philosophie und Erlebnis in Senecas Dialogen," Anhang, "Ein römischer Zug in Senecas Denken," in *Kleine Schriften*, vol. 1 (Hildesheim, 1965), 440–46, esp. 446. I take no view on the facts of the matter concerning Augustinian notions of the will, on which there is a large and contentious literature. See most recently J. M. Rist, *Augustine* (Cambridge, 1994), esp. chap. 5.

11. Pohlenz, "Philosophie und Erlebnis" (n. 10 above), 445.

12. J. M. Rist, *Stoic Philosophy* (Cambridge, 1969), 224–28, esp. 227.

13. The fullest attempt to show that earlier Stoic psychology amounts to a merely summary treatment of the will is in my *Ethics and Human Action in Early Stoicism* (Oxford, 1985), chaps. 2–3.

14. I. Hadot, *Seneca und die griechisch-römische Tradition der Seelenleitung* (Berlin, 1969), 162–63.

15. Paris, 1973.

16. E.g., in P. Grimal, *Sénèque, ou la conscience de l'empire* (Paris, 1979).

17. P. Donini, *Le scuole, l'anima, l'impero* (Turin, 1982), 202–3.

reference to Seneca's substitution of *voluntas* for Zenonian rationality underpins his bold claim that "Seneca's notion of *voluntas* is a genuine discovery, one which cannot be contained in any version of Stoic philosophy, and not even, truth to tell, in any version of Platonism." Shortly thereafter, A. Dihle, searching for the roots of Augustinian (i.e., traditional) will, focuses briefly on Seneca, noting the same tendencies.<sup>18</sup> He summarizes Seneca's position as a "vague voluntarism." Pohlenz' hypothesis of Roman cultural influence is developed with special emphasis on the impact of Roman law. Like Pohlenz, Dihle sees Roman culture as pushing Seneca in the direction of voluntarism, against the resistance of the "intellectualism" of the predominantly Greek philosophical tradition. Kahn's short discussion of Seneca in "Discovering the Will" aligns itself closely with the voluntaristic and culturally determinist view of Pohlenz, Voelke, and Dihle.<sup>19</sup> Despite the protest against Pohlenz registered by Rist,<sup>20</sup> there has been a remarkably homogeneous view of this issue.

It is time to reassess Seneca's contribution to the problem of the will.<sup>21</sup> The urgency of doing so is reinforced by the growing realization that earlier Stoics, especially Chrysippus, should be aligned with Plato and (even more clearly) with Aristotle in holding a merely summary theory of the will. The contrast between traditional will and summary will is much more helpful and revealing than the polarity "Greek intellectualism vs. Roman voluntarism." We are looking, then, for clear evidence of traditional will, in contrast to summary will. A review of recent discussions reveals broad agreement about the relevant evidence. The later works of Seneca are the principal focus, and the key illustrative texts, the "smoking guns" invoked to establish Seneca's allegedly new emphasis on the will, come from the Letters. There are variations, of course, but as one reads Pohlenz, Hadot, Voelke, Dihle, Kahn, and even Donini, a cluster of five proof texts emerges, each of which is invoked by at least two authorities: Seneca, *Letters* 34.3,<sup>22</sup> 37.5,<sup>23</sup> 71.36,<sup>24</sup> 80.4,<sup>25</sup> and 81.13.<sup>26</sup>

Let us begin with 34.3 and 71.36. In the former Seneca says: "The *pars magna* of goodness is wanting (*velle*) to become good," and in the latter:

18. A. Dihle, *The Theory of the Will in Classical Antiquity* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London, 1982), 134–35, 142; note that the Sather lectures on which this book was based had been delivered in 1974.

19. Kahn, "Discovering the Will" (n. 8 above), 254–55.

20. Part of the reason why Rist's view has been ignored is that it is too extreme; for it is not the case, as Rist claims, "that neither Seneca nor Epictetus has made any significant variation on the doctrine of the Old Stoia relating to willing and knowing" (*Stoic Philosophy* [n. 12 above], 231–32).

21. Since my concern is to deal with Seneca's contribution, I pay no attention here to Epictetus, whose work came far too late to influence Seneca. There has, of course, been a tradition of bringing Epictetus' notion of *προαίρεσις* into discussions of Senecan *voluntas* (see, e.g., Kahn, "Discovering the Will"; Rist, *Augustine* [n. 11 above], esp. 187). But since there is no evidence whatsoever that earlier Stoics, or indeed any philosopher who might have influenced Seneca, anticipated his use of the term, such speculation cannot contribute to an understanding of Seneca's usage.

22. Pohlenz, "Philosophie und Erlebnis," 445; Hadot, *Seneca* (n. 14 above), 163; Voelke, *L'idée de volonté* (p. 46 above), 170.

23. Pohlenz, 445; Voelke, 176; Dihle, *Theory of the Will* (n. 18 above), 134. See Rist, *Stoic Philosophy*, 225.

24. Pohlenz, 445; Hadot, 163; Voelke, 170; Dihle, 135. See Rist, 226.

25. Pohlenz, 445; Voelke, 179; Dihle, 135; Donini, *Le scuole* (n. 17 above), 202; Kahn, "Discovering the Will," 254. See Rist, 224.

26. Pohlenz, 446; Hadot, 163; Voelke, 175; Donini, 134, 203. See Rist, 225–26.

"The *pars magna* of moral progress is wanting (*velle*) to make progress." Here, according to Pohlenz, *voluntas* is made into the decisive factor in moral improvement, and his very wording is echoed closely by Hadot; Voelke takes the same view of the significance of these texts: will is a distinct psychological force, so distinct that it can be recognized as a necessary condition for moral progress (*bonitas* in 34.3, *profectus* in 71.36).<sup>27</sup> These critics see will as a distinct mental event here. But why? Consider 34.3 more closely. Seneca is describing with some pride his efforts to improve his friend Lucilius:

Meum opus es. Ego cum vidissem indolem tuam, inieci manum, exhortatus sum, addidi stimulos nec lente ire passus sum sed subinde incitavi; et nunc idem facio, sed iam currentem hortor et invicem hortantem. "Quid aliud?" inquis, "adhuc volo." In hoc plurimum est, non sic quomodo principia totius operis dimidium occupare dicuntur. Ista res animo constat; itaque pars magna bonitatis est velle fieri bonum.

You are my handiwork. When I noticed your potential, I got to work on you, exhorted you, spurred you on, and did not allow you to progress slowly; I drove you constantly. And even now I do the same, but now I am exhorting someone who is already in the race and encouraging me in return. You say, "what else [would you expect]? I still want it." Here that is the most important thing, and not just in the proverbial sense that the beginnings are half of the whole. This business turns upon the mind. And so the greater part of goodness is wanting to become good.

Is there a traditional will at work here? Hardly. Seneca merely claims that desire for a given result is crucial, especially when the matter in hand is intrinsically mental. In the much more complex letter (*Ep.* 71), Seneca makes the same point, while encouraging Lucilius to persevere with moral progress despite the backsliding that is inevitable whenever one relaxes one's efforts (*Ep.* 71.36):

Instemus itaque et perseveremus; plus quam profligavimus restat, sed magna pars est profectus velle proficere. Huius rei conscius mihi sum: volo et mente tota volo.

Let us press on and stick to it. There is more ahead of us than we have yet wasted. But a crucial part of making progress is wanting to—and this I am aware of, that I want it and want it with all my mind.

This is one of Dihle's proof texts for "vague voluntarism."<sup>28</sup> Here too one might note that the wanting in question is for something mental or psychological. It is second-order wanting, which will be important, but it is not at all clear that we have here a distinct mental act rooted in a special faculty.

Dihle goes further when considering another popular proof text (*Ep.* 37.4–5). He sees Seneca as progressing from "traditional Stoic intellectualism" to the introduction of "an independent act of the will rather than reason itself, and he explicitly refuses an explanation of this phenomenon.

27. Dihle (*Theory of the Will*, p. 240, n. 84) correctly sees that 34.3 presumes a traditional psychology and that *voluntas* can sometimes mean nothing more than 'wish' or 'desire', though he wrongly limits that meaning to the tragedies.

28. Dihle, *Theory of the Will*, 135; see p. 240, n. 86. Dihle also invokes 80.4 in this sense, for which see below.

Seneca did realize that will should be grasped independently of both cognition and irrational impulse" (*Theory of the Will*, 134–35). This closely follows Pohlenz' assessment, and Voelke (*L'Idée de volonté*, 175–76) seems to take this one step further, regarding the passage as proof that human will can be an irreducible mystery: "ailleurs il affirme que la conscience ne pénètre jamais jusqu'aux racines du vouloir." He claims that this passage shows "l'irréductibilité du vouloir au savoir." What does Seneca say to provoke such an assessment? That if you want to master all, you must submit yourself to reason. Reason will teach you what to undertake and how to go at it and will keep you from just blundering into things (37.5): "You won't be able to show me anybody who knows how he came to want what he wants; he isn't brought there by planning but driven there by impulses." ("Neminem mihi dabis qui sciat quomodo quod vult coeperit velle: non consilio adductus illo sed impetu inactus est.")

The cure for unreflective desires is reason, that is, thinking and planning.<sup>29</sup> If you look around, you will not find people who know how they have come to have the desires they do. But that situation is a mark of failure. Fools are in a muddle, after all, and Seneca is urging that we take control and develop the self-knowledge we need in order to improve ourselves. There does not seem to be any evidence of traditional will here.

What about 80.4? "And what *do* you need to become good? The desire." ("Quid tibi opus est ut sis bonus? Velle.") Seneca is celebrating the benefits of social isolation—everyone who could bother him is off watching the ball game and he is left in peace. The distant noise of the crowd impinges but does not really upset him; it merely makes him reflect on how much effort is put into physical improvement and how little into psychological betterment. A particular contrast lies in the dependence of the body on other people and external resources: physical training is far from autonomous. But mental training is. Sportsmen need a lot of food, drink, oil, and training. Moral improvement comes without *apparatus* and without *impensa* (*Ep.* 80.4):

Quidquid facere te potest bonum tecum est. Quid tibi opus est ut sis bonus? Velle. Quid autem melius potes velle quam eripere te huic servituti quae omnes premit . . . ?

Whatever you need for becoming good is with you. And what *do* you need to become good? The desire. And what can you more readily desire than to remove yourself from the servitude that oppresses everyone else . . . ?

It is in contrast to the enormous and tyrannical demands of physical training that Seneca says that "all you need is the desire." It is not plausible to take this as a claim that desire—or will—is totally self-sufficient for moral progress; the point in context is rhetorical. Seneca wants to stress the importance of inner self-sufficiency, and the resolution to improve is the best indication of that. Elsewhere he will emphasize the need for advice, for

29. Rist (*Stoic Philosophy*, 225) is right to reject Pohlenz' reading of this text, but is wrong, I think, in taking it to be strictly in accordance with the orthodox Stoic analysis of action. In particular, it is unlikely that *impulsus* here represents ὁρμή.

friends, for philosophical guidance. Here he wants to argue, rhetorically to be sure (but this is, after all, the finale to Book 9 of the *Letters* and Seneca can claim a fitting rhetorical license), that turning inward is freedom, that one's larger social context and one's body are marks of slavery. Notice the trope: "And what can you more readily desire than to remove yourself from the servitude that oppresses everyone else?" Freedom is the most desirable thing, so this rhetorical question packs great power. But what ties it to its context is the one word, *velle*, which some have wanted to take as evidence of an entirely new theory of the will. It is only by ignoring the context and the nature of Seneca's argument that one can find in this passage clear evidence of a traditional will.<sup>30</sup>

Finally we turn to *Letter* 81, a kind of appendix to Seneca's treatise on favors (*On Favors*). I have recently discussed the argument of this letter,<sup>31</sup> but the essential point of 81.13 needs to be reasserted. The slogan *velle non discitur*, which is so often taken out of context,<sup>32</sup> underlines the importance of know-how in the life of the sage. Only the wise man knows how to be grateful and to repay a favor. A non-sage can only do his best. The difference between the two is the whole point of this passage (which is in the midst of Seneca's explication of the paradox that only the wise man is grateful), so it only makes sense to focus on the point of contrast between the wise man and the fool. One knows how and the other does not, and Seneca goes on to tell Lucilius how the sage does what he does. The shared feature of wise man and fool is their willingness—their *voluntas*—to repay the favor. So Seneca does not want to talk about how to acquire that. When he says *velle non discitur*, he is not claiming that our traditional will is immune to cognitive causation. He is saying no more than that in his contrast between sage and fool (where the fool is *ex hypothesi* a well-intentioned moral agent lacking only that wisdom that sages alone can have), the willingness or desire to repay a favor is not what is at issue. But that is only because Seneca's self-defined interests here are limited, not because he is moving towards a theory of traditional will. In saying that the basic desire to act decently is not learned in the way that moral know-how is learned, Seneca has not moved beyond Aristotle's position. There is nothing here that suggests a distinct faculty or specially reserved set of dispositions whose function it is to generate acts of volition.

30. Again, Rist (*Stoic Philosophy*, 224) rightly rejects Pohlenz' reading but is insufficiently subtle in his own. That Donini (*Le scuole*, 202), Voelke (*L'Idée de volonté*, 179), and Dihle (*Theory of Will*, p. 135 and n. 86) can see voluntarism, even "vague voluntarism," here is powerful testimony to a belief in Seneca's commitment to traditional will that is prior to the most cursory reading of the evidence. On the other hand, this usage may fit better into another pattern: sometimes the terms *voluntas* and *velle* can be translated as 'resolve' or 'intend' (though 'desire' may be a more apt sense in these cases). See, e.g., *Ben.* 3.21.2, 3.30.1, 5.4.1, 5.12.7, 5.14.2; *Q Nat.* 2.38.3; *Ad Marciam de consolatione* 23.2 (cf. *Ep.* 70.21, 77.6); *Ep.* 95.8, 70.21, 77.6. A string of passages from *De ira* (1.8.1, 2.1.4, 2.2.1, 2.35) could also in principle be brought under the meaning 'resolve', though it seems that here the real work is being done by the terms 'judgment' and 'decision'.

31. B. Inwood, "Politics and Paradox in Seneca's *On Favors*," chap. 9 in *Justice and Generosity*, ed. A. Laks and M. Schofield (Cambridge, 1995), esp. 249–54.

32. Even Rist (*Stoic Philosophy*, 225–26) exploits the passage to make a larger point not warranted by the run of the argument.

So much for the allegedly best evidence for traditional will.<sup>33</sup> As far as these key texts are concerned we have no reason to see anything but summary will in Seneca, and his position is to that extent like Aristotle's or Chrysippus'. But that cannot be the whole story, and it is wrong to claim that there is nothing new or interesting in Seneca's theory of the will. Those who have seen in Seneca's work the beginnings of a traditional will have, I suspect, been encouraged by some genuine features of his work. But in order to see which features of his work might be exploited as evidence of traditional will, we will need to detach ourselves from the lexical framework within which this whole debate has been conducted so far (for *voluntas* seldom means much more than considered desire or willingness). We will have to stop looking for it under the traditional label and cast our net more widely. What we find, I think, is much more interesting. Even though Seneca does not really help to invent the traditional will (for we find nothing inconsistent with summary will), his work contains features that might well have helped to inspire those who did. But we will not find those key ideas isolated under easily recognizable labels.<sup>34</sup>

Instead, I suggest that we should look for Seneca's indirect and unintended contribution to thinking about traditional will in his reflections on mental causation, self-control, self-awareness, and self-shaping. When Seneca emphasizes our relationship to our own selves, when he focuses on how we treat our own character and temperament as things on which we can reflect and act, on which we can have causal impact, then despite the fact that he is still working within the confines of summary will, he may nevertheless be contributing to the development of a traditional sense of will; certainly he is making it easier for modern critics to interpret him as doing so. It is the second-order quality of our mental lives (i.e., when the mind takes itself as its own object) that plays the most important role in constructing the will,<sup>35</sup> and Seneca, though hardly unique in his awareness of

33. The *De beneficiis* has also been seen as a locus of the traditional will, but only Donini (*Le scuole*) has attended to the question in any detail. Although the book has a number of distinctive features dealing with Seneca's view of human motivation, the use of *voluntas* in it is clearly compatible with summary will.

34. Not even under the label 'assent', which Voelke (*L'Idée de volonté*, chap. 3) and Kahn ("Discovering the Will," 245–46) treat as a possible forerunner of the traditional will. But that interest is misplaced, since the earlier Stoic theory is clearly a summary theory of the will. In Seneca, the mental event most clearly associable with will is not assent, and the more carefully one looks at the use Seneca makes of the early Stoic notion of assent, the harder it is to see in it any significant development towards the idea of traditional will. (Assent is, of course, a mental event of considerable importance to Seneca in various contexts, e.g., in *Ep.* 113 and in the early chapters of *De ira* 2.)

35. I am aware of the broad similarity between Senecan summary 'will', as I propose to understand it in what follows, and the views about the importance of second-order desires in the work of Frankfurt (see n. 6 above). It would be reckless to overestimate the similarities, but they are nevertheless undeniable. How to account for them? It is tempting to diagnose a simple case of reinvention of the wheel. Frankfurt and Seneca may simply be making comparably acute observations of fundamentally similar moral phenomena. Historical influence can, I think, safely be ruled out. Similarly, the fact that his analysis of the relevant phenomena of mental life is so suggestive of some features of traditional will ought to remind us that, after all, the *explananda* are the same for both summary and traditional will. The philosophical superiority of summary will lies, in my view, in its greater simplicity and economy. The historical superiority of the claim that Seneca does not go beyond summary will lies in the fact that his predecessors in the school and outside it did not, and that there is no evidence at all that Seneca innovated, or even thought of himself as doing so.



this aspect of mental life, stands out for the frequency and explicitness of his interest.<sup>36</sup>

Seneca is not, of course, a professional philosopher and teacher, with commitments to the full articulation of theory and to the improvement of other people's souls; this may contribute to his greater concentration on self-improvement and self-shaping,<sup>37</sup> and on the impact one can have on one-self.<sup>38</sup> And the tendency to do so is pervasive; it is found throughout his career, unlike the use of the term *voluntas*. As early as the *Consolation to Marcia*, written in the reign of Caligula,<sup>39</sup> Seneca can say (8.3): "Now you are your own guardian; but there is a big difference between permitting yourself to grieve and ordering yourself to do so." ("Nunc te ipsa custodis; multum autem interest utrum tibi permittas maerere an imperes.") In *On the Shortness of Life* (written between 48 and 55), Seneca shows how wide-ranging this interest is when he harnesses to the theme of self-reflection and self-assessment the Stoic metaphysical analysis of time (sec. 10). In *On Tranquillity* we have an illustration of the relationship between self-knowledge and self-management: in section 6 Seneca emphasizes that we need to start from self-inspection (*inspicere . . . nosmet ipsos*) and self-assessment (*se ipsum aestimare*) before analyzing the other relevant aspects of our situation: the tasks we set ourselves and the other people we have to deal with. Self-shaping and the self-conscious management of the relationship between self and others are crucial to achieving tranquillity (see esp. sec. 17).

But the treatise *On Anger* is the most extensive reflection on self-shaping in Seneca's corpus, concentrating, as any treatment of anger would tend to do, on self-control.<sup>40</sup> Throughout the work Seneca shows an acute awareness of the importance of our initial responses to provocation, and of the need to manage them rather than to deny them.<sup>41</sup> This practical goal—the development of an internalized ability to eliminate passions—leads Seneca to take a particular interest in the Stoic theory of προπάθειαι (2.1–4, 1.16.7). And when he turns his attention to remedies, he divides his efforts between character formation (the prevention of irascibility as a character trait) and instruction on how to react under provocation. When discussing character formation, Seneca divides his attentions between the shaping of

36. Important texts on self-shaping: *Ep.* 11, 16, 76.34 (*praemeditatio*), 80, 83, 90.27 (*artifex vitae*), 91.15–16, 98.4.

37. The craft of self-shaping is still practiced among psychologists. For a range of contemporary perspectives and clinical practices, see, e.g., D. M. Wegner and J. W. Pennebaker, eds., *Handbook of Mental Control* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ, 1993).

38. When he does think primarily of someone else, as often happens in the letters to Lucilius, he will emphasize his causal relationship to him: "you are my handiwork," as he once said to his friend (*Ep.* 34.2).

39. For all works I follow M. T. Griffin's dating in Appendix A of *Seneca: A Philosopher in Politics*, 2d ed. (Oxford, 1992).

40. See esp. D. Zillman, "Mental Control of Angry Aggression," and D. M. Tice and R. F. Baumeister, "Controlling Anger: Self-Induced Emotional Change," chaps. 17 and 18 in Wegner and Pennebaker, *Handbook of Mental Control*. For reflection on the utility in anger-control of the self-conscious manipulation of the description under which one sees things, see J. Kennett and M. Smith, "Frog and Toad Lose Control," *Analysis* 56 (1996): 63–73. In the *De ira* Seneca too shows an interest in this particular technique.

41. This theme also appears clearly in *Helv.* 17.1–2, where Seneca concedes (un-Stoically) to his mother that grief is not in *nostra potestate* and argues against mere distraction from grief, on the grounds that admitting its power and defeating it by reason is a more stable resolution.

children's characters as they grow up (2.19–21)—actions carried out on others—and advice to adults for shaping themselves.

Seneca's interest in self-shaping continues throughout his career, and there are important reflections on it in his latest works, in the *Natural Questions* (e.g., 2.59.3, 6.2.1), in the *Letters*, and in the socially oriented *On Favors*. For our purposes, we need to concentrate on themes and language that establish the relevance of this to a mental event such as the will. There is a lot to choose from, but in the limited space available I will focus on the following: the language of self-directed commands; explicitly second-order psychological processes; and the role of judgment (*iudicium* and *arbitrium*).

I begin with self-directed commands. Early on, Seneca marked the difference between allowing oneself to feel something and ordering oneself to do so; I am thinking of the passage of the *Consolation to Marcia* mentioned above. The same ideas are developed many years later in *Letter* 99.15–21: we can either allow tears to fall or (under the influence of socially inculcated conceptions) order them to fall. The naturally occurring tears, the ones we can permit but do not order, are said to come *volentibus nobis* (99.19). This echoes Seneca's view of uncontrollable reactions in the *On Anger* (see *(non) insciis nobis*, 2.1.1; *non voluntate nostra, in nostra potestate*, 2.2.1; *voluntarium vitium*, 2.2.2; *motus . . . animorum moveri nolentium*, 2.2.5, etc.) where in-principle controllability (rather than mere causation by one's own desires and beliefs) is taken as a mark of voluntariness.<sup>42</sup> A similar correlation of self-command with self-control and rational reflection is apparent in *Letter* 116.1:

Utrum satius sit modicos habere adfectus an nullos saepe quaesitum est. Nostri illos expellunt, Peripatetici temperant. Ego non video quomodo salubris esse aut utilis possit ulla mediocritas morbi. Noli timere: nihil eorum quae tibi non vis negari eripio. Facilem me indulgentemque praebebo rebus ad quas tendis et quas aut necessarias vitae aut utiles aut iucundas putas: detraham vitium. Nam cum tibi cupere interdixero, velle permittam, ut eadem illa intrepidus facias, ut certiore consilio, ut voluptates ipsas magis sentias: quidni ad te magis perventurae sint si illis imperabis quam si servies?

The question has often been put whether it is better to have moderate passions or none. Our school drives them out, the Peripatetics moderate them. I do not see how any moderately diseased state can be healthy or useful. But never fear: I am not depriving you of anything that you aren't willing to have denied to you. I will show myself to be easy-going and indulgent with regard to the things you pursue and that you think to be necessary to life, or useful, or pleasant. It is the vice that I will remove. For though I forbid you to desire I will permit you to want, so that you can do the same things, but without fear and with a surer counsel, and so that you can better perceive the pleasures themselves. And why shouldn't they make a bigger impact on you if you give them orders rather than taking orders from them?

The language of self-command is used in two different modes. Sometimes Seneca uses explicitly reflexive language (e.g., *De ira* 2.12.4)<sup>43</sup> where

42. See B. Inwood, "Seneca and Psychological Dualism," in *Passions and Perceptions*, ed. J. Brun-schwig and M. Nussbaum (Cambridge and Paris, 1993), esp. 176.

43. *De ira* 2.12.4, 3.13.7, *Ben.* 5.7.5, *Ep.* 26.3, 52.14, 70.25, 78.2, 95.18, 104.3, 117.23.

the command is both given and accepted by either the agent or some significant psychological part of the agent; and at other times one part of the soul gives an order either to another part or to the agent as a whole (e.g., *De ira* 3.32).<sup>44</sup> In either mode the effect is the same. Seneca is in most such cases<sup>45</sup> isolating a mental event that has an important, if not decisive, bearing on action and ascriptions of responsibility. This is clear at *On Favours* 5.7.5 where Seneca asks, “Whom will you admire more than the man who commands himself, who has himself in his own power?” (“Quem magis admiraberis, quam qui imperat sibi, quam qui se habet in potestate?”) It is even clearer in *Letter* 78.2 where Seneca describes his own resolution to live despite suicidal despair at his prolonged ill health:

Saepe impetum cepi adrumpendae vitae: patris me indulgentissimi senectus retinuit. Cogitavi enim non quam fortiter ego mori possem, sed quam ille fortiter desiderare non posset. Itaque imperavi mihi ut viverem; aliquando enim et vivere fortiter facere est.

Often I formed an impulse to kill myself, but the age of my most loving father stopped me. I thought not of how bravely I could die, but of how bravely he would not be able to bear the loss. And so I ordered myself to live, for sometimes it is an act of courage to live, too.

In view of his own despair, this is what most of us would call an act of will. We can see the same connection of self-command with will in a passage of the *On Anger* (2.12.3–4):

“Non potest” inquit “omnis ex animo ira tolli, nec hoc hominis natura patitur.” Atqui nihil est tam difficile et arduum quod non humana mens vincat et in familiaritatem perducatur adsidua meditatio, nullique sunt tam feri et sui iuris adfectus ut non disciplina perdomentur. Quodcumque sibi imperavit animus optinuit: quidam ne umquam riderent consecuti sunt; vino quidam, alii venere, quidam omni umore interdixere corporibus; alius contentus brevi somno vigiliam indefatigabilem extendit; didicerunt tenuissimis et adversis funibus currere et ingentia vixque humanis toleranda viribus onera portare et in immensam altitudinem mergi ac sine ulla respirandi vice perpeti maria. Mille sunt alia in quibus pertinacia inpedimentum omne transcendit ostenditque nihil esse difficile cuius sibi ipsa mens patientiam indiceret.

[The Peripatetic] says, “one cannot remove anger completely from the soul; human nature just doesn’t admit of that.” But there is nothing so difficult and demanding that the human mind cannot master it and by constant practice make it habitual; no passions are so fierce and autonomous that they cannot be tamed by training. The soul accomplishes whatever it commands itself to do. Some people have succeeded in never laughing. Some people have completely deprived their bodies of wine, others of sex, others of all forms of liquid. Some other man is content with very little sleep and can stay awake indefinitely without fatigue. Others have learned to run on slender, slanting ropes and to carry huge loads scarcely bearable by human strength, or to dive to incredible depths

44. *De ira* 1.9.2, 2.35.2, 3.23.4, *Tranq.* 2.8, *Helv.* 18.9, *Ben.* 5.20.7, *Ep.* 18.3, 26.3, 65.1, 66.32, 85.32, 88.29, 90.19, 92.9 and 26, 106.10, 107.6.

45. In some of the texts it is hard to be certain whether a distinct event is envisaged; in some cases we may be dealing with metaphorical descriptions of internal dispositions of the soul. But many if not most of these texts should, I think, be taken literally, and the others form part of a more general discourse about self-shaping and self-control.

and endure the sea without pause for breath. There are a thousand other cases where persistence overcomes every obstacle and demonstrates that nothing is difficult if the mind tells itself to endure it.

What we would without hesitation describe as an act of will, and indeed think of as paradigm instances of willpower, are here portrayed as self-directed commands issued in the pursuit of moral self-control and character improvement. Here we have mental events, acts of 'will', despite the absence of the obvious label that connects readily to modern lexical correspondences. For Seneca, then, it is self-directed acts of command that are acts of 'will'.

In contemporary discussions it is not unusual to look to second-order psychological phenomena in order to isolate what is distinctive about human mental processes as against those shared with animals; the best-known such contemporary treatment is that of Frankfurt and his followers (see nn. 6 and 35 above), and in his seminal discussion, "Freedom of the Will and the Concept of the Person," he astutely picks out a form of second-orderness as being central to the difference between persons and mere animals. Indeed, one can concede that all relatively complex vertebrates desire and even believe; but only humans, perhaps, can want effectively to want things and work at believing things. Second-orderness in this sense is common in Seneca. At the opening of *Letter* 61 he urges:

Desinamus quod voluimus velle. Ego certe id ago <ne> senex eadem velim quae puer volui. In hoc unum eunt dies, in hoc noctes, hoc opus meum est, haec cogitatio, inponere veteribus malis finem.<sup>46</sup>

Let us cease to want what we have been wanting. I certainly work at not wanting the same things as an old man that I wanted as a boy. This is what my days and nights are focused on, this is my labor and my meditation: to put an end to my long-standing mistakes.

Such self-awareness and self-shaping can be used for positive ends (as here) or to deceive others, as in *Letter* 95.2: "There are many things we want to seem to want, but in fact don't want" (*Multa videri volumus velle sed nolumus*). Making one's own wanting a matter of explicit reflection and even manipulation is a common technique in Seneca. In the preface to *Natural Questions* 3 (sec. 12) we read: "What is most important? Being able to bear misfortune with a happy heart; to take whatever happens as though you wanted it to happen—for you would have had to want it if only you had known that everything happens by divine decree" ("Quid est praecipuum? Posse laeto animo adversa tolerare; quidquid acciderit, sic ferre, quasi tibi volueris accidere—debuisses enim velle, si scisses omnia ex decreto dei fieri").

This concern with achieving explicit control over one's own desires also manifests itself in his typically Stoic concern with consistency. Always having the same desires becomes a mark of moral progress, even of virtue. This is explicit at *Letter* 20.4–6:

46. Cf. *Ep.* 27.2.

Etiamnunc dicam unde sit ista inconstantia et dissimilitudo rerum consiliorumque: nemo proponit sibi quid velit, nec si proposuit perseverat in eo, sed transilit; nec tantum mutat sed redit et in ea quae deseruit ac damnavit revolvitur. Itaque ut relinquam definitiones sapientiae veteres et totum complectar humanae vitae modum, hoc possum contentus esse: quid est sapientia? Semper idem velle atque idem nolle. Licet illam exceptiunculam non adicias, ut rectum sit quod velis; non potest enim cuiquam idem semper placere nisi rectum. Nesciunt ergo homines quid velint nisi illo momento quo volunt; in totum nulli velle aut nolle decretum est; variatur cotidie iudicium et in contrarium vertitur ac plerisque agitur vita per lusum. Preme ergo quod coepisti, et fortasse perduceris aut ad summum aut eo quod summum nondum esse solus intellegas.

And now let me tell you where this inconsistency and the bad fit between actions and plans come from: no one asks himself what he should want, and if he has done so, he does not stick to it but jumps around. He doesn't just change, but also flips back, and returns to what he has repudiated and abandoned. So, to set aside the traditional definitions of wisdom and try to include the entire measure of human life, I can be satisfied with this: what is wisdom? always to want the same thing and to not want the same thing. You don't even have to add the clause "providing that what you want is right." For no one can be always satisfied by the same thing unless it is right. Hence men do not know what they want, except at the very moment when they are doing the wanting. No one has resolved to want or not want forever. Their judgment varies daily and reverses itself; most people live life like a game. So stick to what you started on, and perhaps you will reach the top, or a point which you alone can tell is not the top.

At *Letter* 52.1 this is expressed as "wanting something once and for all" (*quicquam semel velle*),<sup>47</sup> and in *Letter* 95.58 the connection between "wanting the same things always" and having "true desires" (*vera velle*) is again dependent on having a grasp of philosophical *decreta*.<sup>48</sup> The notion of self-conscious control of one's own wants and desires also turns up in *Letter* 37.5, considered above. But what is actually important here is the notion of wanting something *consilio adductus* (upon reflection) rather than *impetu inpactus* (simply driven by psychological causes). What points to the will here is the explicit second-orderness, not the mere word *velle*.<sup>49</sup>

This idea is also apparent in the treatise *On Anger*. At 2.26.4–5 Seneca is arguing against being angry at animals, on the grounds that they cannot will (*velle*) to harm us and so do not actually do us any injury (a view about the moral centrality of self-conscious intent that recurs in the *On Favors*): they do us no injury "because they cannot want to; for it is no injury unless it proceeds from a plan (*nisi a consilio profecta*). Hence they can damage us, as can a piece of iron or a stone, but they certainly cannot do injury to us" ("quia velle non possunt; non est enim iniuria nisi a consilio profecta. Nocere itaque nobis possunt ut ferrum aut lapis, iniuriam quidem facere non possunt"). The key idea is that the kind of desire relevant to a responsible will is one that flows not just from a desiderative state (animals do have

47. Here, note also the problematization of trying to control our wants.

48. Consistency with others is as important as consistency with oneself over time: *idem velle atque idem nolle* is a mark of wisdom and true friendship (*Ep.* 109.16); cf. *De ira* 3.34.2: "quod vinculum amoris esse debebat seditionis atque odi causa est, idem velle."

49. The same could be said of *Ep.* 71.36: it is the second-orderness and not the wanting that makes the passage of interest.

those—*consuetudo* and training are mentioned a few lines below), but from a conscious plan: the contrast to habit and training is *iudicium*, a judgment.

From the beginning of conscious reflection on free will and responsibility the idea of a bivalent possibility has been central: the ability to do or not to do something has been taken as a mark of freedom.<sup>50</sup> If that is the mark of morally responsible, free action, then it would not be surprising to see Seneca, in his reflections on what it means to will something, put a similar condition on wanting. There is a kind of wanting that might turn up in any belief-desire explanation, of course, and that is the commonest use in Seneca. But in many contexts the bivalent possibility is about wanting itself, not overt actions; he emphasizes that the ability to *want or not want* the same thing is what counts. Genuine *velle* entails *posse nolle*. This theme occurs prominently in *On Favours*. Consider 2.18.7–8:

Cum eligendum dico, cui debeas, vim maiorem et metum excipio, quibus adhibitis electio perit. Si liberum est tibi, si arbitrii tui est, utrum velis an non, id apud te ipse perpendes; si necessitas tollit arbitrium, scies te non accipere, sed parere. Nemo in id accipiendo obligatur, quod illi repudiare non licuit; si vis scire, an velim, effice, ut possim nolle. "Vitam tamen tibi dedit." Non refert, quid sit, quod datur, nisi a volente, nisi volenti datur; si servasti me, non ideo servator es.

When I say that you should choose the person to be indebted to, I exempt, of course force majeure and fear: when they are brought to bear there is no choice. If it is open to you, if it is within your ability to decide whether you want to or not, then you will weigh the matter up for yourself. But if compulsion removes the ability to decide, you should realize that you are not receiving a favor but obeying. No one is obligated by receiving something that it was not permitted to reject. If you want to know whether I am willing, make it possible for me to be unwilling! "But he gave you life!" What is given doesn't matter, unless it was given by a willing donor to a willing recipient. Just because you saved me, it does not follow that you are my savior.

Of course, this sets Seneca up for a problem when dealing with perfect agents, such as gods or sages. So in a later book (see 6.21–22) Seneca must extricate himself dialectically from potential paradoxes. For present purposes, Seneca's slick argument is less interesting than the terms of debate: he and his interlocutor share the belief that there is a clear moral significance attached to being able to want or not to want, parallel to the issue of being able to do or not to do. Wanting has become a reflective, internalized action.<sup>51</sup>

I have been considering cases where Seneca shows a sharp interest in acts of self-command, and where he is reflecting carefully on our second-order desire, our wanting to want. The final ingredient in Seneca's recipe for traditional will has, like self-command, the character of a mental event. I refer

50. For Aristotle's use of this as a mark of voluntariness, see *Eth. Nic.* 3, 1110a17–18, *Eth. Eud.* 1225b8, 1226b30–32; see also R. Sorabji, *Necessity, Cause, and Blame* (Ithaca, 1980), 235. Frankfurt's own refinement of the so-called "alternate possibilities" criterion for moral responsibility is expounded in "Alternate Possibilities and Moral Responsibility," *JPh* 66 (1969): 829–39; reprinted as chap. 1 of *The Importance of What We Care About*.

51. Compare *Ep.* 49.2, 67.2, 95.49, 116.8 for other sharply observed reflections on wanting and ability.

to Seneca's striking use of the language of passing judgment: *arbitrium* and *iudicium* are the key terms.

This use is found prominently in the treatise *On Anger*.<sup>52</sup> Judgment and decision (as I shall translate *iudicium* and *arbitrium*) are part of the language of legal authority. The treatise is addressed, after all, to Seneca's brother the provincial governor, and the ostensible reason for this dedication is that a man in such a position has more reason than most to reflect upon anger and to learn self-control: a great deal of the therapeutic part of the treatise makes better sense when one remembers that it is being addressed to an administrator with virtually unlimited power over noncitizens in his jurisdiction. 2.22–24 is a clear illustration of this. Two contrasting cases are cited to demonstrate the need to pause, in a judicial spirit, for assessment, hearing both sides before coming to a decision on any important matter: the tyrant Hippias who caused his own downfall by hasty reaction to suspicions, and the decision of Julius Caesar to prevent himself from overreaction by destroying potentially damaging evidence before even reading it.

The general point in this passage<sup>53</sup> is that once one causes oneself to stop to debate the merits of one's reactions to provocation, then any subsequent action taken will be the result of a quasi-judicial decision.<sup>54</sup> Once Seneca reconceptualizes the agent as a judge (*iudex*) the fact that one's mental reactions are self-caused events (like traditional will) becomes clear. As a judge, one must critically assess the fairness of one's own response to events; one's mental life takes on the explicit rationality of the court-room and one's reactions are subject to debate and the expectation of detachment. When in 2.30 Seneca considers situations where the facts are not in question, he urges that we consider a variety of mitigating considerations, especially the intention (*voluntas*) of the agents, before reacting. Like judges, we should strive to consider the broadest possible range of relevant considerations before passing judgment. Note that *voluntas* is not the word for will, but the model of reaction and decision that Seneca invokes here captures a good deal of what traditional will is supposed to involve.

Political and judicial contexts provide the ideal forum for practicing the control of anger and for some of the language in terms of which it can be understood. The interest in this sense of judgment starts in Book 1 of *On Anger*, at 1.15.3 where Seneca uses the example of Socrates to urge delay and reflection before punishment. The choice is between hasty, that is, angry, punishment and duly considered quasi-judicial reaction: "cum eo magis ad emendationem poena proficiat, si iudicio † lata † est."<sup>55</sup> In 1.17.1, Seneca

52. Cf. *Clem.* 2.2.2, where it occurs for the same reasons as in *De ira*; compare the passage to *De ira* 2.1.1 where the same contrast of *iudicium* and *impetus* occurs. In the *De vita beata* 5.3 (cf. 6.2, 9.3) *iudicium* is linked to notions of control, not just reason. The *De beneficiis* presents us with *iudicium* and *arbitrium* in connection with reflective choice; similarly *Ep.* 71.2–3, 87.1.

53. The use of the metaphor of judicial processes to capture the phenomena of moral decision making in this, and many other, texts merits a separate study, which I hope to complete in the near future.

54. See also *De ira* 2.26.6 and 2.28–31.

55. Cf. *De ira* 3.12.4–7.

argues against the Peripatetic notion that anger can be used in the war against wickedness because it is unlike other weapons: *bellica instrumenta* can be taken up and put down at the decision of the bearer. The passion anger is not like that. Again, it is the presence of a prior act of considered decision that makes all the difference. The identical idea had been raised earlier at 1.7.4, in connection with the Chrysippean example of the runner.<sup>56</sup>

But it is in the technical early chapters of Book 2 that judgment and decision play their clearest role in adumbrating the scope and role of traditional will. For Seneca sees the task of managing the passions as a matter of imposing on oneself a delay in the reaction that would otherwise occur, a delay that provides the time needed for a considered judgment or decision to be formed. And that involves all of the elements of traditional will: second-orderness; mental events; treating one's own psychological processes as "other," as something upon which one may act; and the effort required by the task of self-shaping.

At *On Anger* 2.1.1 the question is whether anger is a matter of *iudicium* or *impetus*; the fact that a judgment is required is what brings in *voluntas* and controllability at 2.2.1. Judgment and *voluntas* are yoked again at 2.3.5, and 2.4.2 underlines the role of judgment in distinguishing passions from pre-passionate behavior. The motion of the mind that is caused by a judgment can also be eliminated by it. This emphasis on controllability by an explicit mental act is striking throughout the book, even in passages where *voluntas* is not invoked.<sup>57</sup> In fact, one of the charming conceits of Seneca's strategy in the book is the emphasis he puts on the fact that we can fake anger: in response to Peripatetic suggestions that anger is necessary, Seneca several times responds that if ever we do need anger to influence other people then we can pretend.<sup>58</sup>

It is time to conclude this discussion of the various aspects of will in Seneca's works. It is too simple and deeply misleading to invoke various passages of Seneca in which he uses *voluntas* or *velle* to support suggestions that he helped to invent or discover the will as a distinct faculty or set of specialized dispositions. Yet it is equally wrong to retrench around the claim that there is nothing new in Senecan psychology. Conceptual history is a messy business, and all the more so when writers like Seneca (and Plato) who do not use technical terms in a consistent and systematic way play an important role in the process. As I see it, there is no new word for will in Seneca, at least not one with a distinctive usage, though *voluntas* may from time to time happen to pick out a phenomenon claimed for itself by traditional will. What matters far more than such lexical considerations is the cluster of key interests that Seneca has, interests that together (but not separately) produce something that covers the phenomena that traditional

56. See *SVF* 3.462. The idea that what distinguishes a passionate from a nonpassionate response lies in its amenability to decision also turns up at *De ira* 2.35.2.

57. The various consequentialist arguments about the utility of anger (e.g., 2.33–36 and 3.14–5) all presuppose that it is controllable.

58. Note 2.17.1; 2.14 reveals the same connection between conscious controllability and feigning.



will is supposed to be uniquely able to accommodate. The interest in second-orderness in the form of talk about self-shaping and self-knowledge; the language of self-command; the focus on self-control, especially in the face of natural human proclivities to precipitate and passionate response; and the singling out of a moment of causally efficacious judgment or decision in the process of reacting to provocative stimuli; these are Seneca's contributions to the development of the will. These contributions are fully compatible with the philosophical project centered on notions of 'summary will', and yet evoke phenomena often thought to be explicable only in terms of traditional will. This seems to me to be evidence for a philosophical depth in Seneca's work that continues to demand exploration.

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